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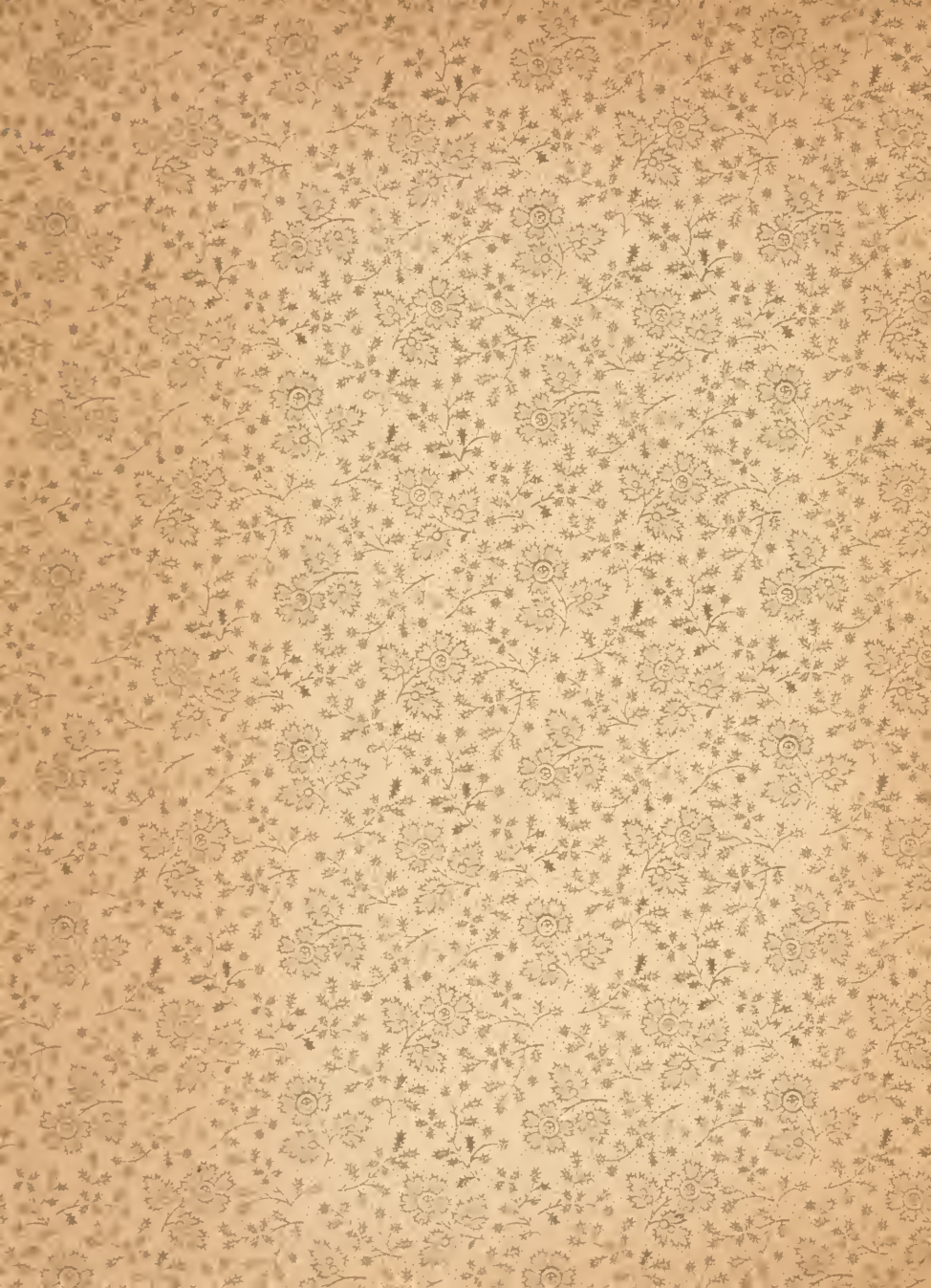


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JERRY'S FAMILY



BY JAMES OTIS








Helen Frick.

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"STOP! YOU'RE RUNNIN' OVER A BOY!"

JERRY'S FAMILY

A STORY OF

A STREET WAIF OF NEW YORK

By JAMES OTIS

AUTHOR OF

"TOBY TYLER," "JENNY WREN'S BOARDING-HOUSE,"
"THE BOYS' REVOLT," ETC.

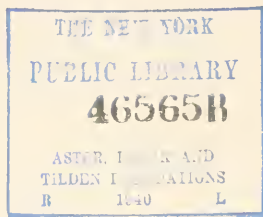
ILLUSTRATED BY

GEORGE FOSTER BARNES

BOSTON

ESTES AND LAURIAT

PUBLISHERS



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JERRY'S FAMILY

JERRY'S FAMILY.



CHAPTER I.

HOMELESS.

"SAY, Missis! That youngster 'll fill hisself up with water 'less you cover his mouth over, or take him home. The rain 's goin' down his throat in a reg'lar stream."

It was a boy who spoke,—a boy who could not be mistaken for one on his way to or from a comfortable home, but a citizen of the streets, knowing no other landlord than the policeman who evicted him from cart, packing-case or door-way whenever he took possession of either for the purpose of obtaining a night's lodging. Not a prepossessing-looking boy, to judge from his garments,—a pair of trousers many sizes too large, which boasted of several patches sewn on with twine; a coat much too small and minus a collar; a fragment of a hat, and boots resurrected from an ash-barrel grave. "A friendly sort of a boy," one would say on looking at his face, the most striking feature of which was a nose that turned up toward the brown eyes, as if winking at

them, leaving entirely unprotected a mouth which was more often drawn into proper shape for whistling than distended by crying.

This boy — Jerry Bascomb — stood with his hands in his pockets to shelter them from the rain, looking curiously at a woman who was half crouching, half sitting on the steps of a house in whose windows were printed announcements that it was "To Let." The large black letters on a white ground seemed to be staring down at her and the baby on her knees, as if asking by what right she took advantage of this particular place in which to halt before having received permission from "James Jones, Real Estate Agent," whose address was plainly set forth beneath them.

"Better turn him over before he busts," the lad continued, after waiting in vain several seconds for a reply.

This remark aroused the woman; she looked up quickly, at the same moment covering the child's face with her shawl, and then gazed around as if bewildered.

Young this stranger undoubtedly was, but privation and suffering had so sharpened the otherwise regular features that close scrutiny was necessary to an understanding of the fact that she had but lately merged from girlhood into womanhood. Her face was one which would, under the most unfavourable circumstances, attract sympathetic attention, and even at this moment, when the eyes were red and swollen by much weeping, it was pleasant to look upon.

Jerry was interested only in the baby; he believed the woman to be intoxicated, and had seen so many

such cases that he did not consider it worth his while to expose himself to the merciless pelting of the storm in order to watch the vagaries of a drunken person.

"You oughter be sent to the Island for luggin' a kid along while you're on a booze," he said, sharply, and had turned away when his movements were arrested by the sound of the woman's voice.

"Will you tell me where the Jersey City ferry is?"

Jerry turned quickly, for there was that in the tone of the voice which attracted him.

He understood, from his experience of street-life, that this woman was not intoxicated, and he fancied she was in distress.

"Are you goin' there to-night?"

"I suppose so,—I hardly know. I *must* go somewhere."

"Yes, I reckon you're bound to get in outer the rain, 'less you want that kid to be drowned. Do you live over to Jersey City?"

"No; at Trenton. I ought not to say that, for I have no home now."

"You must have lost it mighty sudden if you aint very certain 'bout it."

The woman made no reply.

Partially uncovering the child, she pressed her face against the tiny cheek, swaying her body to and fro in the same manner which had caused Jerry to believe her under the influence of stimulants.

Master Bascomb looked at her in perplexity for an instant, and then half-turned as if to depart.

"If she wants to make a fool of herself, I don't know as it's anybody's business. It aint my kid," he muttered, "an' it seems like I don't know enough to go in outer the rain, standin' 'round here watchin' crazy folks!"

Another glance at the bent form, and Jerry stepped toward her quickly, seating himself by the woman's side as he said, in a matter-of-fact tone,—

"Look here, Missis, you oughter run that baby in outer the wet. I don't know much 'bout sich things, but I've got sense enough to see it won't do him any good to be soaked like this. If you aint got any home, why not shinney 'round an' find one?"

"Where shall I go? Do you know of any people who would give me the use of a room until I could earn the money with which to pay the rent?"

"Well, there aint many of that kind what's left alive. 'Cordin' to the way I've struck it, they want the cash right down on the nail. Say! how'd you happen to strike this town, an' be hangin' 'round on a night like this?"

"I came to see my husband," the woman replied, in a voice choked with sobs

"So you're married, eh? Well, that settles it; all you've got to do is to make the old man look out for you an' the kid."

"He is in jail,—in jail!" she moaned. "He could n't keep the promise made baby and me, even for one day, although he knew we were coming to meet him when his term of imprisonment expired, but committed another crime before we could get here."



"LOOK HERE, MISSIS, YOU OUGHTER RUN THAT BABY IN OUTER
THE WET."

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Jerry whistled two or three bars of "Annie Rooney" very softly.

"So that's the way of it? Does he drink?"

"Yes," the woman sobbed. "He wouldn't do anything wrong when he was sober."

"I've noticed that's the way with most of 'em," Jerry said, reflectively. "When a feller wants to go crooked he fills hisself up, an' then lays all the trouble on the rum. Now he's snug an' dry in jail, an' you an' the kid out here drownin'! It kinder strikes me he's gettin' the best of this thing, an' you've got the tough end."

Master Bascomb waited several seconds, as if for a reply, and receiving none, asked abruptly,—

"How much money have you got?"

"Not a penny. Dick told me he should have a few dollars when he came out of jail, and that it was only necessary for us to get here. I had three cents when I came off the ferry-boat, but spent that this afternoon buying milk for Paul."

"Who's Dick?"

"God help me! he's my husband!"

"And who's Paul?" Jerry asked, uneasily.

"My only comfort," the poor mother said, nestling her face once more against the child's.

Jerry whistled "Annie Rooney" several seconds, and asked, as if the melody had suggested some idea,—

"S'pose you was back where you come from, what'd you do?"

"I don't know. It was difficult to find work there such as a woman with a young child could do, and I

hoped it might be possible to get employment here, in case Dick did n't succeed in securing a situation.

Again the notes of "Annie Rooney" mingled with the patter of the rain, but were quickly interrupted by the crying of the child.

"Say! you've got to run him in outer the rain, that's all there is 'bout it! Hold on here a minute!" And without waiting for a reply, Jerry ran to the corner of the street.

There, under the light of the street-lamp, he drew from his pocket a handful of pennies with a few pieces of silver scattered among them, and hurriedly counted the collection.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Missis," he said, as he returned. "There's a lodgin'-house up here on Canal Street where I can git you put in for the night, an' we'll see how this thing looks in the mornin'."

"Do you mean that I can stay there and pay at some future time for the accommodation?"

"Well, I reckon it'll be a slim kind of a chance if you're countin' on hangin' Mother Dow up, 'cause she would n't have it nohow. I'll 'tend to that end of the business, an' you've got nothing to do but take care of the kid."

"But I can't use your money, my boy."

"Why not? Could n't you pay me back same's you would Mother Dow?"

"Yes, if that is what you mean. It surely seems as though I might find some employment in this big city, does n't it?"

"Of course; that's all right," Jerry replied, although not in a very confident tone. "You'll be fixed fine as silk by to-morrer night; an' now the sooner you git where it's dry the better. S'pose you let me take the youngster?"

"No, no, I can carry him!" she exclaimed, quickly covering the baby again with the shawl.

"Then come on. If we're goin' to pay for swell lodgin's, you might as well keep 'em as long as you can. There's no use hangin' 'round here."

"Do you realize how kind you are to me?" the woman asked after they had walked the distance of a block in silence.

"I don't see 's there's anythin' much in what I'm doin'."

"You are spending your money for a person whom you never saw before, and remaining out of doors in this terrible storm."

"Well, I don't allow that's so very great. Say! what's your name?"

"Helen Moulton."

"Well, Helen, you wanter step out lively, an' a little faster'n you're doin' now, 'less we'll never get there," and Jerry quickened his pace until he was so far in advance that his new acquaintance could not embarrass him by expressions of gratitude.

CHAPTER II.

A LODGING - HOUSE.

"THERE's the shanty!" Jerry finally said, as he pointed to a dingy, neglected-looking building a short distance in advance. "Mother Dow thinks it's mighty swell, an' tucks on the price if there's a chance; but it takes her down a peg or two when you crack up Job Dyer's place."

It was not an inviting-looking place under the best of circumstances; but it is doubtful if Mrs. Moulton gave any heed to her surroundings.

The landlady was exactly the kind of a person in appearance one who stood in the hallway would expect to see.

Short and very stout was she, with an expression of mingled avarice and ill-temper on her face, and clad in slatternly garments, which were not conspicuous because of cleanliness.

"What do you want, pullin' my bell at this time of night?" she asked, sharply, of Jerry before having observed his companion.

"I've brought a lodger for you, Mother Dow. It's a cash job. How much for a bed for Helen an' the kid?"

"Who is she?"

"A pertic'lar friend of mine what's jest come down to see me. I was goin' to take her up to the Astor House; but she said she never'd feel contented till she was where she could see your sweet face now an' then."

"How long does she want to stay?" And Mrs. Dow held the lamp above her head, that she might see more clearly the shrinking woman who had entered the hall.

"Only one night. Come, get to business, Mother Dow; I aint goin' to spend a great while with you women-folks."

"I can give you a good room for half-a-dollar."

"That's jest twice too much, an' you know it. I'll give you twenty-five cents, an' here's your money," and Jerry drew forth his collection of coins. "If you don't want that, say so, an' we'll go up to Job Dyer's. They do allow his rooms are better 'n yourn."

"Then what made you come here?"

"What made me?" and Jerry assumed an injured look. "Aint I allers been a customer of yourn, an' do you think I'd go there if I could git in here at a fair price? Besides, Helen will feel better if she's with sich a sweet old lady as you."

"Stop that chaffin'. Give me thirty-five cents an' she shall have the best in the house; but I would n't come down on the price at sich a rate for anybody but an old lodger like yourself."

"You're awful good, Mother Dow, an' I've said that more times than I can remember when the other fellers was layin' it on thick 'bout Job's rooms bein' so fine; but I promised a dyin' friend that I would n't pay

more 'n a quarter for lodgin's. Besides, it's so late Helen would n't get but half a night's sleep, anyhow. Say twenty-five cents, an' here 's the cash."

Mother Dow extended her hand quickly. Jerry dropped into it the money, which the old lady counted carefully, and having done so, asked Master Bascomb, quite sharply,—

"Well, what are you waiting for?"

"I wanter see what kind of a room Helen's goin' to have. You can't fool me, Mother Dow; she's bound to get a reg'lar twenty-five-cent bed, so long as it's paid for, or off we go to Job's."

It was evident Mrs. Dow had had business transactions with Jerry previous to this occasion, for without a word of remonstrance she led the way to the rear of the house, then up three flights of crazy stairs, and opened the door of a small apartment.

"There!" she cried, triumphantly. "Do you think Job Dyer's got any better rooms than that in his house?"

"Well, he 'lows he has; but this is all right," and Jerry looked around with an air of satisfaction at the advertising chromos on the walls. "Leave the lamp here for Helen, an' I'll come back in a minute."

"But I aint goin' to have you traipsin' to-an'-fro half the night, same's you did when that lame boy was here."

"That'll be all right; I'm only comin' once," and before either of the women could have stopped him, had they so desired, Master Bascomb clattered down the

steps with a speed and violence that threatened to demolish the crazy structure.

Ten minutes later he returned, scolded Mrs. Dow because she did not answer his summons at the door promptly, and ran rapidly to the third floor.

There was no necessity to knock in order to announce his presence, for it would have been a very deaf person who had failed to hear his ascent of the shaky stairs.

"Hello! Got the kid to-bed, eh? Well, that's somethin' like! I'll bet he's chucklin' to hisself 'cause he aint out in the rain! I did n't reckon you'd had any supper, so brought 'round a little spread. Take right hold, an' don't be bashful; it's all for you!" And Jerry unrolled several articles which had been wrapped in brown paper.

Six slices of bologna, four biscuits, a stick of candy coated with alleged chocolate, and a snuffy-brown cake, made up the collection.

"You want to get outside these things jest as soon's you know how an' tackle this lot," he said, as he drew from his pocket half a pint or more of peanuts. "Now be sure to wait for me in the mornin', if I should happen to be late."

"Can you afford to spend so much money —"

Before Mrs. Moulton could conclude the remark, Jerry was making his way down stairs with more noise than three ordinary boys ought to have caused.

He did not close the door behind him, and the woman whom he had befriended heard the landlady cry, shrilly:

"How *dare* you make such a noise in my house, Jerry Bascomb!"

"Now stop fizzin, or you'll turn sour on a wet night like this, old woman. Don't you s'pose I know what's my rights after I've paid a quarter for a room?"

The banging of the front door told that Master Bascomb had not stopped to parley longer, and the turning of the key was sufficient proof that Mrs. Dow did not intend to be annoyed by this particular patron again until it might become necessary in the morning.

Once on the outside, Jerry seemed suddenly to have lost all desire to move quickly.

Up one street and down another he walked slowly, regardless of the rain, until fully an hour had been devoted to the stroll, when he stopped and looked around as if in search of some one.

"When a feller was fixed as fine as me, it seems kinder tough to be huntin' for a door-way, without much inside of him," he muttered.

He had halted on Park Row, and but a short distance away was an inviting-looking door-way.

There were no policemen to be seen, and after assuring himself that he had not been mistaken as to this fact, Jerry darted into the temporary shelter.

He ascended to the second floor, listened intently to assure himself there were no occupants about, and then laid down on the floor in such a position that the lower step of the flight which led to the story above would serve as a pillow.

"I reckon I won't oversleep myself here," he said,



"HOW DARE YOU MAKE SUCH A NOISE IN MY HOUSE,
JERRY BASCOMB!"

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grimly, noting the unpleasant fact that his clothes were literally sodden with water, "an' it 'll come handy, 'cause I've got a pile of hustlin' to do when the fellers begin to show up. Did n't them bolivars look nice? Oh no, I guess not! I'd ate one, but I did n't know how much it takes to fill up a kid, an' it would n't done to let him go hungry."

Then Jerry pictured to himself such a feast as he would have if his pockets were full of money, and while engaged in this not very exciting pleasure, he fell asleep.

It was yet dark when he awakened, but he arose from the hard floor with a long yawn.

"If I'd been to bed up to Mother Dow's, I don't reckon I'd turned out quite so early; but this floor aint as soft as some I've seen, an' it can't be long now before the fellers come down town."

Having ascertained, by looking out of the door, that the rain had ceased to fall, Master Bascomb ventured forth, and half an hour later met Sam Haley, an old friend, and a former partner in the news-vending business.

"Say, Sam, how er you fixed?"

"Way up. What's goin' on?"

"Nothin' much, only I've got a fam'ly on my hands, an' am bound to raise some cash mighty soon."

"How much?"

"Four dollars."

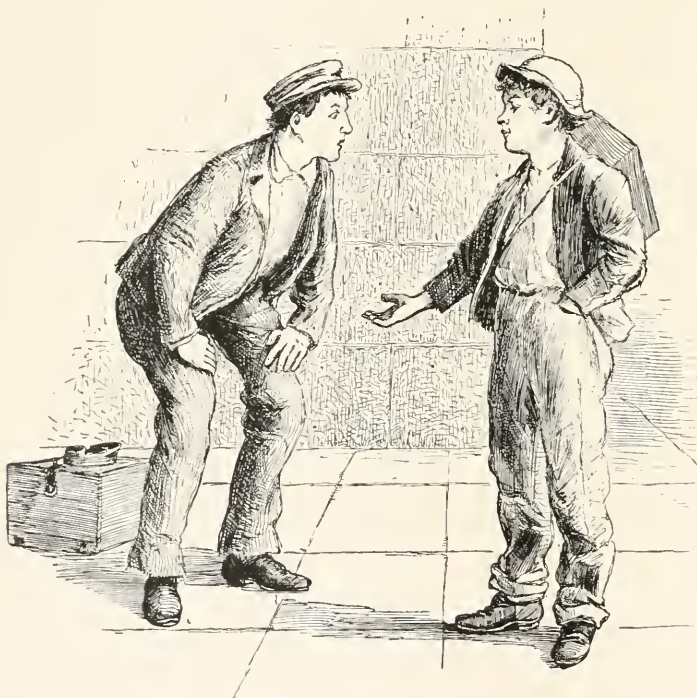
"Four! What's creepin' over you, Jerry?"

"Now, don't try to be funny. How much will you lend me?"

"Fifty cents sizes up my pile."

"Will yer let me have it?"

"Course I will. How long 'fore I'll see it agin?"
And Master Haley drew with no slight difficulty, a handful of pennies and silver from his pocket.



"WHAT'S CREEPIN' OVER YOU, JERRY?"

"A couple of days. I'll settle right down to work before noon; but I've got to get a lot of cash first."

"Where'd you find a fam'ly?" Sam asked, as he began the laborious task of counting his hoard.

"Some folks of mine what come in from the country, an' I'm bound to see 'em through in style. Oh, they're dandies — no flies on *them*! I'll flash 'em up some day."

Sam had succeeded in counting out the amount of money he was willing to loan, and before it was possible for him to ask another question, Jerry was half a block distant.

A young gentleman who was known to his intimate friends as "Bolivar's Ghost" was the next acquaintance with whom Jerry met, but in this case the appeal for a loan was refused because of lack of funds.

Master Bascomb did not devote much time to this unprofitable meeting, but hurried from one acquaintance to another, extracting money from his friends much as the bee extracts honey from the flowers, and when the necessary amount had been collected, hastened a short distance up town, where he began a systematic search for "furnished rooms."

It was not yet daylight when it began to be rumored among the young news-merchants who were waiting at the publication offices for the daily papers that Jerry Bascomb was borrowing money from such of his acquaintances as had more cash than was absolutely necessary for the proper transaction of business.

"I let him have fifty cents," Sam Haley said to a friend, "an' he could 'a got more if I'd had it. Jerry allers pays when he 'grees to, but it's too bad for him to throw good money 'round the way he does sometimes."

"What's up now?"

"I dunno. He says he's got a fam'ly on his hands, an' jest as likely's not it's true, 'cause he wants four dollars."

"Four dollars! Is he countin' on buyin' the whole city?"

"Looks so, don't it? That feller could be way up if he'd only hold on to his money, an' yet he was broke last night."

"You're wrong, 'cause I know of forty cents he had."

"He got away with it, somehow, 'cause he was sleepin' in the door-way of 34 when I turned out, an' looked like he could eat an *Italian* an' all his stock."

"Somebody oughter get right down an' give Jerry a good talkin' to; he means straight, but it don't seem's though he knew how to hold on to a cent. I'd—there's the papers!"

CHAPTER III.

A HOME.

It was not yet seven o'clock in the morning when Jerry Bascomb, having completed his preparations for the proper reception of his family, turned his steps in the direction of Mother Dow's lodging-house.

Jerry had accomplished all he believed it was necessary to accomplish in order that Helen and the baby might enjoy the comforts of a home, and there was an expression of most intense satisfaction on his face as he laid his hand once more on the knob of the bell, which he hoped at some time in the near future to "yank" from its fastenings.

Master Bascomb stood during one brief second enjoying in anticipation the anger he was about to arouse, and then put all his strength in the effort to announce his arrival.

And he succeeded to his entire satisfaction.

The long clang of the bell resounded through the carpetless halls, as if even the metal itself shared the indignation of its owner, and Jerry smiled serenely as he heard the rapid footsteps of the landlady.

"If you ring my bell like that another time, I'll call a pelliceman!" she cried, angrily, as, opening the door, she saw her early and noisy visitor.

"All right; call him now. I don't 'ject to your spoonin' a cop, if it'll do you any good."

"You little wretch!" and Mrs. Dow's hand was raised as if to strike, but it fell harmlessly, for before it



"JERRY SMILED SERENELY AS HE HEARD THE RAPID FOOTSTEPS
OF THE LANDLADY."

was at proper height for the delivery of an effective blow, Master Bascomb was nearly at the head of the first flight of stairs.

The irate woman ventured some remark, and Jerry made a great deal of noise in ascending the shaky steps, therefore the words were lost to the one who might have been benefited by them; but the fact that he had ruffled the landlady's temper seemed sufficient to complete Master Bascomb's satisfaction, for he was looking perfectly contented with himself and everyone around him when he entered the room occupied by his "family."

"How's the kid? Actin' kinder chipper, aint he? Say, Helen, was there much stirrin' 'round in the bed last night? Sam Haley says there's more life in one of Mother Dow's beds than you can find on the Bowery Saturday nights. You're kinder run down, aint yer? P'rhaps I got here too early?"

"I have been awake an hour. Will you tell me what your name is?"

"I hope you have n't been feelin' bad jest 'cause you did n't know, eh? It's Jerry Bascomb. Some of the fellers 'low I was named Jeremiah, but that aint so."

"Well, Jerry, I want to thank you for your kindness to me. It seemed last night as if I was in a daze, and I did n't prevent you from spending your money, as I should have done."

"I dunno how you'd helped yourself if I put my foot down; but there's no use talkin' 'bout that. You're bound to 'tend to business, an' so am I. I've hired three rooms over on East Broadway, — paid a week's rent cash, — an' we'll start housekeepin'."

"Have you done all this simply for a stranger, whom you never saw before?"

"Looks like it, eh? Get inter your duds, an' we'll be off, 'cause I want'er have things straightened, out so 's I can go to work."

"But you don't fancy I will let you do such a thing for me?"

"Why not? Besides, how er you goin' to help it, after the cash is put up? What's the matter? What's makin' you cry now?"

"Jerry, I did n't suppose there was a boy like you in all the world."

"I don't reckon there is, an' it's lucky for him. Come on! You don't want'er cry like that, or you'll start the kid, an' then there *will* be a row."

"But, Jerry, I must try to find a place in which to work; I can't use your money."

"I've got that all figgered out. Can you sew?"

"Of course."

"Then I'll see to a job for you. Come with me now, an' we'll buy somethin' for breakfast. I reckon I'll have you straightened out in proper shape before noon. You'll stay over in them rooms, an' take care of the baby; I'll go round to the places where they want women to sew for 'em, get more work 'n you can do in a month, an' then 'tend to my own biz. See?"

"Jerry, it must have been God who sent you to me last night when my heart was breaking."

"I don't reckon it was. God don't have much truck with fellers like me, an' He don't go very heavy in helpin' out on the rent. I was kinder snoopin' 'round, an' should n't have stopped to look at you if it had n't

been for the kid. Say, Missis, you don't want'er fool here when so much is to be done. If I've got a fam'ly on my hands, there 's a good deal of humpin' for somebody, an' I'm the one what 's bound to do it."

Five minutes later, Mrs. Dow shook her clenched hand threateningly at Jerry, as he passed out of the house, walking meekly by the side of his "family."

Master Bascomb had leased three small attic rooms, in a rear building on East Broadway; but instead of conducting Helen there by the shortest route, he made a long *détour* in order to arrive at a certain provision store, whose contents he had often devoured with hungry eyes.

"How much for one of them things?" he asked, pointing to a can of preserved peaches, not because he particularly wanted the fruit, but owing to the fact that the label was the most gorgeous of anything to be seen.

"Twelve cents."

"Pass her down here. How much is them?" and Jerry indicated with his thumb a box of toilet soap in brilliant wrappings.

"Six cents."

"Give us one."

The next article which attracted his attention was a jar of anchovies, but before he could secure it Helen asked, in a whisper,—

"Why are you buying these things, Jerry?"

"So 's we can have a high-old breakfast. Did n't think I was doin' it jest for the sake of spendin' money, did yer?"

"But you don't want anything of that kind. I should think it would be better to get a small piece of meat, — something cheap, which could be made into a stew; a loaf of bread, potatoes, and such things."

"Aint what I bought good to eat?" Jerry asked, in surprise, and Helen replied, with a faint smile, —

"I don't think the toilet soap will be particularly appetizing. Of course you need something of the kind, but —"

"Who's been buyin' soap?" Jerry Bascomb asked, indignantly.

Helen unfastened the gaudy wrapper, and Jerry gazed reprovingly and suspiciously at the clerk who had filled his order.

"I come in here for somethin' to eat," he said, sternly, "an' you can't run off sich truck on me."

The man replaced the offending package on the shelf, and Jerry walked to and fro, softly whistling "Annie Rooney," as he tried in vain to make a selection.

Finally he approached his companion, and said, in a whisper, —

"Say, s'posen you pick out what you want? Don't try to save money, but go in big, 'cause you an' the kid are bound to have a swell breakfast in the new house."

"How much money have you got, Jerry?"

"Forty-two cents for this heat, an' I'd be willin' to spend it all if you can get as much stuff as will see us through the day."

Helen exchanged the peaches for potatoes, and then purchased what Jerry believed was a most undesirable collection.

He made no protest, however, save by scowling threateningly at the baby when Mrs. Moulton bought soup meat instead of a juicy steak which the clerk proposed she should take; and when the "shopping" had come to an end, Master Bascomb gathered up the articles in his arms as he said, sufficiently loud for the attendant to hear, —

"Folks don't want to try to do me up when I come tradin', 'cause there 's no hay-seed under *my* collar, an' if I don't get my money's worth one time, I will another."

The clerk did not seem to consider it necessary to reply to what was very like an accusation against his honesty, and Jerry led his "family" down the street in what he believed to be a dignified manner.

On arriving at the building in which his apartments were located, Master Bascomb suddenly discovered that it was necessary he should return down town without loss of time.

"Go right up stairs to the top of the shanty, an' that 's our home," he said, as he deposited his packages on the threshold. "I 'm bound to get to work, an' can't afford to fool 'round here any longer. Here 's fifty cents more, an' you 're to buy everything you want."

"But, Jerry!" Helen cried, as Master Bascomb turned. "Surely you intend to wait till I get breakfast ready?"

"That would n't do at all. Do you s'pose I aint got nothin' on hand but to fool 'round with you an' the kid? It's a case of hustlin', now I've got a fam'ly on my hands."

"You can't work without food. It won't take me half an hour to get breakfast, if there are any cooking utensils in the rooms you hired, and surely you can wait that length of time."

"It could n't be done!" was the decided reply. "What would folks think if I did n't show up somewhere near on time? I reckon Bolivar's Ghost has begun to go 'round already tellin' that I've been borrowin' cash enough so 's I can skip inter Canada an' live on the interest of my money. Course I'd like to stay an' see how the kid will act when you turn him loose, but that would n't do. I'll get my breakfast up to Astor's new hotel, I reckon."

Before Helen could have made any reply, Master Bascomb was hurrying away, as if his shoulders were hardly broad enough to bear the burden of responsibility which had been laid upon them.

When, on the evening of this first day of occupancy, he returned according to promise, the attic rooms had taken on an entirely different appearance, and he stood for a moment in the door-way, as if transfixed with surprise.

"Well, say, what have you been doin' here?"

"How do you mean, Jerry?" and Mrs. Moulton looked up in surprise.

"Why, it seem 's if you'd brought in a whole slat of things. It was n't sich a very swell place when I first saw it; but now it's great!"

"There has been nothing brought into this room since you went away. I simply moved the furniture around a little, and made it more cleanly."

"Well, say, stand jest where you are a minute! I want to kinder take the whole thing in. Talk 'bout style! Why, that new hotel of Astor's aint a marker 'long side of it! Got a table-cloth, too, aint yer? There 's the kid crawlin' all over hissself on the floor, an' you standin' up by the stove cookin', and the lamp on the table,—well, I call this great for a feller to come home to! If I 'd thought there 'd been so much chance to swell in havin' a fam'ly, I 'd hunted one up long ago. I dunno but this thing 's gettin' a little too rich for my blood. It don't seem like as if I oughter come in."

"It is I who have no right to be here," Mrs. Moulton said, as if half to herself; and then, stepping quickly toward Jerry, before he had any suspicion of what she was about to do, put her arms around his neck and kissed his not over-cleanly cheek several times.

Master Bascomb looked positively distressed, and to hide his confusion began to play so vigorously with the baby that little Paul set up a shrill scream of protest.

"He can yell, can't he?" Jerry asked, holding the baby out at arm's length, as if afraid closer contact would cause a repetition of the outcry.

"It is only because he is n't acquainted yet. In an hour from now he will be wanting to play with you. But come; supper is ready. I expect you are as hungry as a boy well can be, for it is late, and I suppose you had your dinner at noon."

Jerry nodded; but did not apparently consider it necessary to explain that he had fasted since morning, in order that he might not spend more of his borrowed capital than was absolutely necessary.

"What have you been doing since you left me?"

"Shinin' some; sellin' papers some, an' I got two chances to do errands that brought in forty cents. Say, did you get all this grub with that half-dollar you had?"

"Yes, and I have twelve cents left."

"By Jiminy! Why, that lay-out would cost more'n a dollar down to a saloon! I wish Sam Haley could jest put his eye on it!"

"Perhaps it will be more satisfactory to eat it than show it to anyone else," said Helen, with a faint attempt at a smile. "We haven't so many dishes that I can serve it in any other way than directly from the stove."

"It'll be all right, wherever it comes from, so long's there's enough," Jerry replied, in a tone of satisfaction, as he seated himself at the table, and then asked, almost sharply, "What's the matter with the kid?"

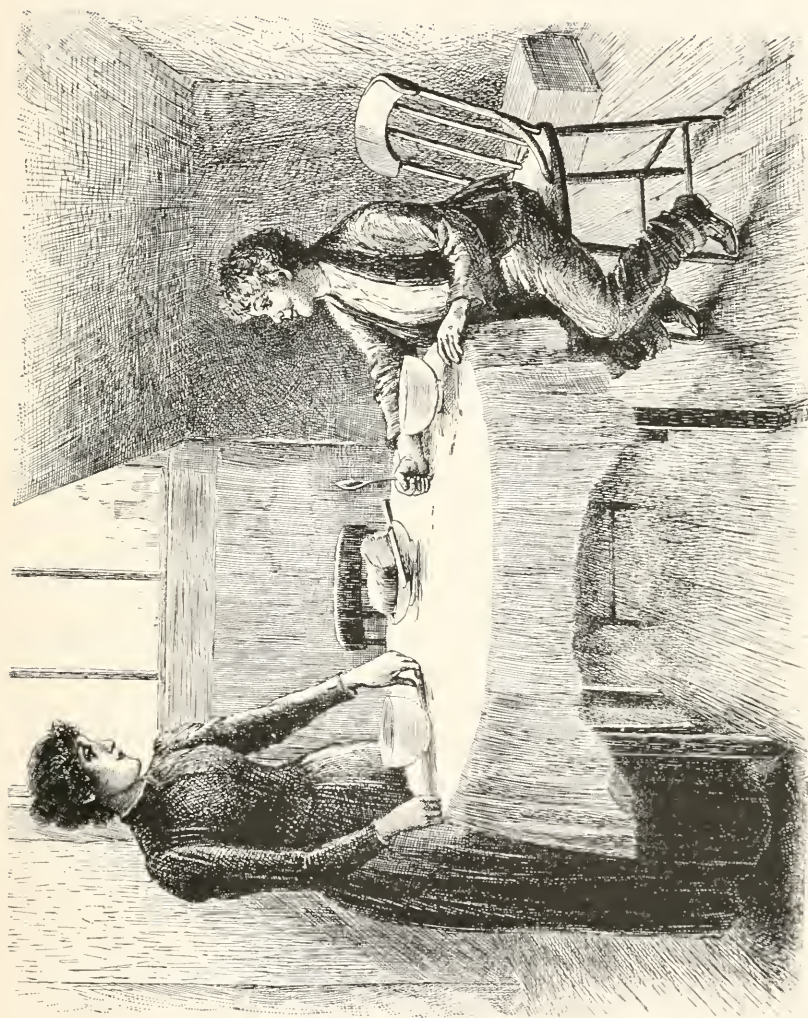
"What *is* the matter?" and Helen ran to the baby's side.

"I mean, why don't he set up here to the table with the rest of the folks?"

"I thought from the way you spoke he had hurt himself. He is n't to come to the table because he does n't know how to behave as yet, and then, again, we have n't any high-chair."

"I must shinney 'round an' buy one; it don't seem jest the thing to shut the little duffer outer the grub while it's hot."

"His porridge is on the stove, and I fancy it will suit him just as well if he does n't get it for a long while yet."



"BY JINKS! I'M JEST THE LUCKIEST FELLER ALIVE!"

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Having waited upon Jerry, Helen took her seat at the table, and hungry though Master Bascomb was, he found it necessary to stop from time to time in order to look first at the sad-faced little woman opposite, and then around the room, each time mentally congratulating himself upon his home-like surroundings.

When his hunger had been in a measure appeased, it seemed as if he felt it absolutely necessary to give words to his thoughts, and began so suddenly and so emphatically as to startle his companion.

"By jinks! I'm jest the luckiest feller alive! Who'd thought I'd ever have a home like this, an' a kid in the bargain. It's too good to seem all true!"

"It is Paul and I who are the fortunate ones, Jerry dear. Where should we be this night but for you?"

"Oh, I reckon you'd got along all right if I had n't flashed up jest as I did, so there aint any use talkin' 'bout that."

"But there is use, Jerry. I want you to understand how grateful I am for what you have done, and how determined I am that we shall not be a burden on you in any way. I must get work —"

"Course you must. I've seen all 'bout that, an' am goin' down on Lispenard Street to-morrer for a slat of stuff a man promised to send up here to see what kind of a fist you'd make at it."

"And am I really to have work?" Helen exclaimed, as if doubting the truth of the statement.

"Piles of it. We'll keep you hummin' right along. I reckon between the two of us we can run this con-

cern quite a spell. I could come pretty nigh doin' it alone, if you was n't so stuck on lendin' a hand. Say, do you s'pose you'll allers be willin' to let me hang 'round here the way I'm doin' now?"

"I willing? Why, Jerry, this is your home, into which you have taken a poor unfortunate woman and her baby, with no regard as to the burden they might be upon you."

"I'll look out for the burden part of it. I reckon so long as I don't kick, there's no need of anybody else doin' it. What I want to know is, how long you'll be willin' to stay?"

The look of sadness on Helen's face deepened; she pushed her plate from her, as if the food had suddenly become repugnant, and remained silent and motionless for what seemed to Jerry a very long while, as he sat watching her intently.

Then she asked in a low tone,—

"Do you know where the prison is,—the one to which they took Dick?"

"I reckon he must be in the Tombs by this time."

"Where is that?"

"Down on Center Street."

"Do you suppose I could find my way there?"

"If you want to go, I'll see you get there an' back."

"I *must* go, Jerry. Dick is my husband."

Now it was Master Bascomb's turn to cease eating, and, regardless of the impropriety of such a thing at the table, he had recourse to melody in the form of "Annie Rooney."

“Let me tell you all about myself, Jerry dear,” Helen began in a low tone. “Until Paul was born we lived in the city of Trenton, where Dick worked at his trade a good portion of the time,—that is, he did when he was sober. He was n’t a drinking man when I married him,—at least, I never supposed he was; but we had hardly settled down in life when he began to come home intoxicated. At first it was only on Saturday nights, but finally it was nearly all the time, until he lost his situation. He was a painter by trade. He came to New York one day in search of work, so he told me, and the next news I had of him was that he had been arrested for—for—for stealing, the paper said. He was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment, and wrote me that when he was free he would never drink again; that he would have a few dollars when he came out; that I was to meet him in New York, and we would begin life anew. He was innocent of the crime charged against him; he was in bad company, and suffered for their misdeeds. I lived as best I could all that dreary time; but it was impossible to earn enough to supply even baby and me with the necessities of life, and one by one I sold everything until, on the day I started for New York to meet Dick, I had only a few pennies more than sufficient to pay for the railroad ticket. I arrived here on the early train yesterday morning and waited at the depot, as Dick directed I should, until nearly night, when I was told where it would be possible to learn if anything had happened to prevent Dick’s release on the day he said he should be free. When I got there, Jerry

dear, when I got there, I learned that he had been set at liberty night before last, and that yesterday noon had been arrested again on a charge of burglary. He came directly from the prison, but forgot all the promises made baby and me,—he was intoxicated during the evening—”

The grief-stricken woman could no longer control her tears, but gave way to a passionate outburst of weeping, Master Bascomb watching her intently and gloomily, as now and then he brushed a suspicious moisture from his eyes, all the while softly whistling “Annie Rooney.”

Not until after many moments had elapsed did Helen look up again, and then, checking the outward expressions of grief as if with an effort, she added, speaking so softly that at times it was difficult for Jerry to catch every word, —

“I lived with my widowed mother when I first met Dick, and God was good to me in that He called her to Himself before she could know all my trouble. I was told yesterday the proofs were so strong against Dick it was almost positive he would be convicted, and as this was the second offence, would be punished by a long term of imprisonment. My baby is the only comfort left me, and yet, unless I am willing to trust him with strangers, it is impossible to find employment by which I can earn even the small amount necessary for subsistence. I am alone, Jerry, all alone in this great world, with not one friend but you, and unless there is some very good fortune in store for me, which does not seem possible, I shan't even have you much longer.”

“Why?” Master Bascomb asked, sharply.

“Because it would be wicked in me to take your hard earnings for the support of baby and myself.”

“But you ’re goin’ to work to-morrer.”

“Yes, Jerry dear; but I am afraid I shan’t receive as much for it as will be sufficient to pay even the rent of these rooms. Such work does not command high prices, and it will be difficult to earn any considerable amount of money without a machine.”

“Well, if I can stand it, you oughter. Say, I’ve got to go out a little while. You don’t care, I reckon?”

“You must never think of me when you want to do anything, Jerry. Surely you ought to be the master here.”

“Well, I shan’t stay a great while. I’ve got a little business, that’s all,” and Master Bascomb, wearing a stern and determined look, walked rapidly out of the room.

CHAPTER IV.

REPRISALS.

AN hour elapsed before Jerry returned, and even that length of time seemed all too short to effect the great change which had been wrought in him.

Master Bascomb could never have been accused of paying too much attention to personal appearance. There were many times when his face was positively dirty, his hair reaching out in every direction, as if searching for a comb, and his clothes heavily laden with dust.

On this night, before entering his new home, he had at least gone through the form of making a toilet, and was, for him, fairly neat when he came to supper.

Now he presented a shockingly disreputable appearance. One sleeve of his coat had been torn completely off, the garment ripped down the back until it was held together only by the hem, and his shirt almost in ribbons. The fragment of a hat was no longer to be seen; one eye was swollen and rapidly assuming a dark-blue hue; his cheek cut; his nose twice its natural size, and nearly every square inch of the exposed portions of his body covered with blood.

"Oh, Jerry! Jerry!" Helen cried, in mingled astonishment and terror. "What *is* the matter? *What* has happened?"

"I look pretty bad, don't I?"

"You are terribly bruised!"

"Yes, that 's the way I feel."

"What *has* been done to you, Jerry?"

"Seem 's though you might know that without askin'. Say, your husband's name's Dick, aint it?"

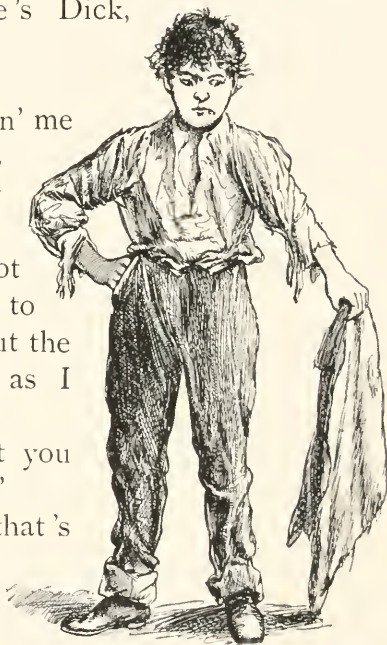
"Yes; why do you ask?"

"Well, while you was tellin' me 'bout him I felt like I was bound to be even for the way he treated you, an' there 's a feller down there what's got the same name, so I 'lowed to thump the life outer him; but the thing did n't turn out jest as I counted on."

"What had he done that you should want to whip him?"

"His name was Dick, an' that 's enough, aint it?" Master Bascomb replied, curtly. "I thought as you would n't care if I came up here an' kinder fixed myself,' cause it would n't look jest right to go down town to-morrer in sich shape."

Before Jerry ceased speaking, Helen had filled a basin with warm water, and, despite that young gentleman's most earnest protestations that he could "do it



"HE PRESENTED A SHOCKINGLY DISREPUTABLE APPEARANCE."

hissself better 'n she could," gently bathed his disfigured face.

"I hope you will never do such a thing again, Jerry."

"Sich as what?"

"That you will never fight."

"A feller 'd have a mighty rough show in this town if he didn't strike out once in a while when he gets jumped on. I reckon there 've been lots of times when I'd starved if I had n't knowed enough to put up my hands."

"But it is n't gentlemanly, Jerry."

"Well, we fellers down this end of the city don't have much time to think 'bout what's gentlemanly. It's a case of hard knocks, an' if you can't give more 'n you're gettin', you stand a pretty poor show."

"But in this instance, Jerry, it was not only ungentlemanly, but absolutely uncalled for. Why should you attempt to whip a boy simply because his name was Dick?"

"After I heard 'bout that Dick of yours, it was like as if I'd *got* to do somethin', an' if I'd had hold of *him* then, it seems if I could a' showed him what's what, no matter how big he is. Say, he's a mighty mean cuss, aint he?"

"Jerry," and Helen spoke in a tone of mild reproof. "You must remember he is Paul's father."

Master Bascomb whistled "Annie Rooney." That is to say, he attempted to do so at such times as Helen was not bathing in the immediate vicinity of his mouth, and when she had finished her task, he added, curtly,

as if in reply to the remark made several moments previous,—

“Well, all I can say is, I’m mighty sorry for Paul.”

“Don’t let us talk about that now, Jerry. “Give me your coat; it needs mending sadly.”

“What did you do with the kid?” and Jerry, after complying with her request, looked around as if until this moment he had forgotten the baby.

“He’s asleep in bed.”

“Tucked him away pretty early, did n’t yer?”

“You know children as young as Paul need a great deal of sleep. Now sit down here while I do the sewing, and tell me all about yourself.”

“That would n’t take very long, ’cause there’s nothin’ to tell.”

“I want to know all about your life. Do you remember your father or mother?”

“I don’t reckon I do,” Jerry replied, carelessly. “I s’pose I had ’em once; but it must a’ been a mighty long while ago.”

“Don’t you remember ever having a home?”

“Can’t say’s I do. I did hang out with Tom Carter’s folks; but his mother used to get drunk mostly, an’ his father never stayed home much of the time, so it was n’t anything like this home is,” and Jerry looked around the poor apartment with an air of pride.

“Why did n’t you remain with the Carters?”

“Well, the old woman was sent down to the Island, an’ that broke the place up. Tom an’ I went to sellin’ papers, an’ after a while he got so swell it was n’t good

enough business for him; he went off in the country somewhere, an' I aint seen him since."

"Have you sold papers since?"

"I've done 'most anything that come handy."

"Why have n't you tried to get a place in a store?"

"Jest look at me! I'm the kind of a duck what could get inter a store, aint I? Folks would be proud to have me 'round, would n't they? I tell you it takes swells to do things like that. Besides, I know a feller what got a job in a shop, an' he did n't earn but two dollars a week. Now, how'd I flash up on that much?"

"Do you always make more?"

"No; but you see I don't have to spend any great pile buyin' clothes, an' two dollars goes a good ways with me, 'cause it's only for grub. Sometimes, though, I blow myself on a bed, same's you had up to Mother Dow's; but that don't happen very often."

"And you never had a home," Helen said, half to herself.

"Well, I've got one now. Say, would you care if I brought the fellers up some time to show 'em how I'm fixed?"

"Why, Jerry, you have the right to invite whom you please, and I shall be only too glad to do anything which will, in the slightest degree, repay your kindness and generosity to Paul and me."

"There you go again! I don't see why you can't keep quiet 'bout that. I'm the one what's havin' the luck outer this, not you. Why, jest see how things are fixed! Figger up what kind of a place I've got, an'

could n't have if it was n't for you. I hope that old man of yours will be put away till he's gray-headed, so's this thing won't be broke up, — no, no, Helen, I did n't mean that!" he added, as he saw the tears gather in her eyes. "I s'pose you think a heap of him, jest as if he was decent; but I never knew before how cheap it was to have a swell house, an' of course I can't help feelin' bad, thinkin' I may lose it."

"But you will not lose it, Jerry dear. So long as I live, no matter where I am, or how I may be situated, you shall remain with me if you wish. It would never be possible to repay you for what Paul and I have received at your hands since last evening."

"Now, see here, Helen, I won't have that kind of talk any more. I want you to understand I'm the one what's gettin' the soft end of this snap. Say, you're 'lowin' to drop inter the Tombs to-morrer mornin', and I'm goin' with yer. Now I don't reckon they'll let you in very early, an' I'd better tackle business a while first."

"What time do you go to work?"

"'Bout four o'clock."

"Do you find customers as early as that?"

"No; but you see we have to be on hand when the papers come out, an' then there's a lot of ducks what come down town 'bout half-past six, so's to be workin' at seven, an' trade's pretty fair till nine o'clock."

"Then if you go with me at ten, it won't interfere with your business."

"That'll be all right. You say when you want to

start, an' I'll see to the rest. I reckon I'd better turn in now."

"It is time, because the coat is mended, and I want your shirt and trousers after you have gone to bed."

Jerry looked around with a comical expression on his face, and then settled down in the chair, as if trying to sit on the lower portion of his backbone.

"Are n't you going?" Helen asked, a few moments later, as she put the finishing stitches in the coat.

"Well, you see," Jerry began, hesitatingly, "I don't reckon on takin' off my clothes when I go to bed, 'cause the floor gets kinder hard sometimes."

"But you are not to sleep on the floor."

"Why not?"

"There is a bed for you in the other room."

"A bed? Why, this place had only one when I hired it."

"Did you suppose I should allow you to lie on the floor?"

"I don't know what you count on 'lowin', but I aint sich a duffer as to take the bed an' turn you out."

"I've made up one for you in the little room next the hall."

Jerry started from his chair very suddenly, with a look of suspicion on his face, and went into the adjoining apartment.

There he remained a few seconds, and passed on to the next room.

When he came back Helen asked, —

"Why did you go out so quickly?"

"I'd kinder got it inter my head that you'd took all the bedclos' for me."

"But you see I did n't."

"I could n't jest make out, 'cause the kid was asleep. I'm fixed in great shape, if it's all square; but I don't know whether you've got enough."

Helen laughed for the first time since Jerry had known her.

"What a suspicious young gentleman you are, to be sure. I have n't robbed either Paul or myself; but asked the woman of the house for another bed and some clothing, and she gave me all we needed."

Jerry looked at her scrutinizingly several seconds, as if to ascertain whether she was deceiving him in any way, and then exclaimed, in the tone of one who has made a sudden discovery, —

"Say, Helen, you're mighty good-lookin' when you laugh. I'd jest like to have Sam Haley see you now. You need n't get so red 'bout it, either, 'cause it's true. If I could rig you same's I've seen some of the swells, I'll bet you'd knock their eyes out! I'm goin' to do it, too, when trade's good, an' then flash you up where there's a whole crowd of the fellers."

With this remark Master Bascomb returned to his sleeping-room, and a few moments later shouted, —

"Hi, Helen! Here's my togs! I reckon you'd better not do much sewin' on that shirt, 'cause it's pretty nigh used up."

There was a swish of clothing in the air, as Master Bascomb threw his "togs" into the room where Paul

lay sleeping; a noisy closing of the door, and the head of the "family" had retired.

He was not yet asleep when Helen stepped softly into the chamber and leaned over the bed on the floor, although he professed to be in dreamland.

She kissed him softly on the lips, with a whispered "God love you, my boy!"

Not until she had stolen silently out, and closed the door softly, lest he should be disturbed by the clicking of the latch, did Master Bascomb make any movement. Then it was to rub both eyes vigorously, as if to clear away a sudden mist which had come over them, and he said, half to himself,—

"I wish I'd jest 'bout thumped the life outer that feller to-night!"

Then Helen heard the soft, low notes of "Annie Rooney," steady and correct at first, but gradually growing spasmodic, until they ceased entirely, and she knew Master Bascomb was asleep.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRISON.

It was not yet nine o'clock in the morning when Master Bascomb entered his home, with every appearance of a boy who had been travelling in haste.

His hat was pushed far back on his head, his cheeks were flushed, and he breathed heavily, like one who had been running.

"I was 'fraid you 'd be fussin' 'cause I had n't come," he said, hurriedly, observing that Helen was not yet ready for the proposed visit, and seating himself where it would be possible to tickle little Paul's ear with a straw, unseen by the usually attentive mother.

"But you have n't been to breakfast yet, Jerry. What time did you go out?"

"Jest before daylight. You must n't count on waitin' grub for me, 'cause, you see, I have to be down town so early, it would n't pay."

"Of course it would! During such time as I live here, you must come home in the forenoon, whenever it is most convenient, and get something warm to eat. What have you had this morning?"

"Well, I got some peanuts off er a /talian down here, when he wan't lookin'; an' they're mighty solid, you know."

"And that is all you have had for breakfast?"

"Aint it enough? There 's been a good many times when I could n't get even them; but I'm playin' in luck this last couple of days, there 's no question 'bout it!"

"You are going to have your breakfast now, at all events," and Helen began serving the long-delayed meal.

"Don't you want to get away pretty soon?"

"There will be plenty of time, Jerry, unless you are anxious to go down town again immediately."

"Oh, I'm fixed till the afternoon papers come out. Say, I made sixty-one cents this mornin'."

"That is a good forenoon's work, I should say."

"Well, you can bet it is! Shined four pair of boots before business got well begun, an' one of the fellers give me fifteen cents. Now, see here, this thing must n't happen agin."

"What do you mean?"

"This breakfast business. I aint goin' to have you waitin' till I get home afore you have anything to eat. The kid might starve to death some mornin' when I had a good deal of work on hand."

"There 's no danger of that," Helen replied, with a sad smile. "Paul has had two breakfasts already. Did you have time to see about the work for me?"

"I'm goin' to get it while you're in the,—while you're seein' the old man. Now, Helen," he added, as he saw the expression of sorrow on her face deepen, "I've been thinkin' this thing over since I went out, an' you must n't feel bad at the way he 's fixed. 'Cordin' to

my way of thinkin', you 're a good deal better off jest as you are, an' I allow he is too. You want to brace up, an' have some style 'bout yer."

"I'm going to try to, Jerry," was the tearful reply. "If it will be possible for me to earn my share of the household expenses, I ought to be very happy, ought n't, I?"

"Well, I don't reckon you could feel as good as me, 'cause you've had sich things afore, an' p'rhaps finer'n this."

During the next ten minutes Master Bascomb's attention was devoted to the food before him, and not until the meal had come to an end did he make any further remark.

"Goin' to take the kid along?"

"We could n't leave him here alone."

"Course you can't; I never thought of that. I'll keep him quiet while you get ready. Don't stop to wash them dishes; I've got considerable business on hand, an' after we come back you won't have anythin' to do but fix up."

Helen obeyed without a question, for although Jerry was so many years younger, he had a masterful manner, which exacted prompt obedience from this woman, who carried such a heavy burden of sorrow.

As they walked down the street towards the prison, Jerry, an eager observer at all times, noted the fact that the expression of grief on Helen's face deepened each moment, and he immediately exerted himself to dispel it.

He pointed out the barroom which was owned by Terrance Flynn, now an alderman of the city, the yard in which Barney Doolan's bull pup whipped Mike Donovan's brindle terrier, the very corner of the street where he had "done up" a couple of fellows who tried to drive him out of the business, and dwelt so long and lovingly upon the details of this combat that he had hardly concluded when they stood at the entrance of the gloomy prison.

"Now brace up!" he whispered. "Don't take back talk from any of 'em, an' be sure not to feel bad when you see the old man, 'cause he's better off there than anywhere else. I'm goin' down to Lispenard Street, an' will be here again by the time you get through."

He waited a moment, to make certain the young wife's timid summons was answered, and then hurried away with all speed.

With bowed head and flushing cheeks Helen entered the gloomy-looking prison, and there was forced to wait many moments before a turnkey was at liberty to conduct her to the prisoner accused of burglary.

When finally she stood on one side of an iron grating, with the man whom she loved on the other, all thoughts save those of her own desolate position fled, and she cried, bitterly,—

"Oh, Dick, Dick! how *could* you do such a wicked, cruel thing, knowing your baby-boy needed you so sorely?"

"Don't, Helen! Don't make it harder for me than it is already! It can't be necessary to tell you that I am nearly heart-broken?"

"It was in your power to say whether you would come to *us* sober and repentant for what could have been forgiven, or come *here*. Oh, Dick, Dick! why did n't you keep your promise to us a few hours?"

"God only knows, my girl, why I did n't! I realize better even than you do what a weak fool I am. Every day during all the long six months I thought of you and Paul constantly. You believed I was not a thief, and I tell you again, Helen, I was innocent of everything save the fault of choosing such companions as I had on that night. I dreamed of what I would do for you and the baby when I was a free man once more, and fancied I knew exactly where to find work. I was positive I would never again have any desire for drink. It was possible to earn a little money while in prison, and with that you and I were to go in search of a home. How I loved you, Helen darling, and how I love you now, when I have wrecked your life completely!"

If Helen Moulton had come to reproach her husband for the misery he caused her, it was not possible to do so.

All the love which was in her heart on the day when she was made a wife welled up as she saw the bowed head of the unhappy, weak man, who was sobbing convulsively, with dry eyes, at the thought of what he had lost.

"Dear Dick, how I pity you!"

"Don't, Helen! That you pity me is worse than if you gave me bitter words for what I have done against you and Paul. My darling, it is too late now for me to

make promises, and you would n't believe me if I did. I cannot be tempted by drink for many a long year, and, sober, you know I will receive all the punishment I deserve. I shall think of you night after night as being hungry,—starving, perhaps, and know that I have done it all. I shall picture you and Paul to myself, suffering from cold, from lack of everything you should have, and yet be powerless to do the smallest thing in atonement for my brutality. Atone for it? It is too late now, and the greatest mercy I could give you would be to end my worthless life."

"Don't talk of killing yourself, Dick. That is a coward's remedy for evil."

"I know it, Helen, and what am I but a coward? There is no fear I shall have the opportunity,—more 's the pity!"

"Dick, be calm. I may not be able to see you again for a long time. Tell me how it was you forgot baby and me?"

There was a movement of the prisoner's hand, as if he would have touched the infant's cheek with his lips, and then, perhaps, remembering how he had wronged the child, he drew back, not quickly, but slowly, with down-cast eyes, fearing to meet his wife's glance lest she should reprove him.

Steadying himself against the iron bars, as if contact with the metal would give strength of purpose to one who had never fought to win it, and forcing back the sobs which came to the quivering lips, he made confession to the woman he had wronged.

"I was released twelve hours sooner than I had anticipated. I came to the city with those in whose company I was the night the theft was committed. They had been kind to me, in their way, Helen, they, — I didn't want to pay for a night's lodging, because I wished to give you every cent. I said I would lounge around the city till your train arrived, for, — they urged me to go with them; it would be better than walking all night. I tried to resist even that, Helen, God knows I did! They — they — I went, determined not to drink a drop, and for half an hour I held out; then —"

"Did you commit the crime with which you are charged, Dick? Is Paul's father really a thief?"

"Oh, Helen! I did n't do — yes, a thief!"

The woman stepped nearer.

The confession had taken away at least a portion of the shame.

"Dick, I can't help loving you, whatever you have made of yourself! Is there no hope for us in the future?"

"For you, God grant there may be. I am a *thief*, and the prison life will only sink the brand deeper."

"It was a thief who went from the cross to paradise."

"There will be no helping hand stretched out to me."

"It is always extended; you have only to grasp it. Dick, the burden will be less hard for me to bear if I can think you are trying each hour to be a better man. We are both young; perhaps will have many years of life before us when you come from the prison. Shall I look forward to having once more the husband I married?"

"I shall always be a convict."

"And I am your wife."

The tears came now, but the man was more ashamed of them than of his crime, for he brushed them quickly away, lest they should be seen.

"Dick, I shall be ready to help make a home when you are free once more; but it must be you who comes to me, not I who go to meet you. It is yet possible to repay baby and me for our trust in you. Come when you can, and be a father to the one and a husband to the other."

"Helen, I swear — no, that is what I did before, and yet I broke the oath with never a thought after the first glass. Try to believe I will do my utmost to repair the wrong I have done you; try to have faith in me once more!"

"I will, Dick. I shall wait patiently until you come to baby and me, believing that you did not deliberately plan to steal."

"I never did! I swear that I do not know what was done from the moment I felt the effects of the liquor until I was coming out of the building, after the burglary had been committed."

"Time is up, you woman with the baby. Get back to your cell, Moulton!"

Helen started in alarm, as the harsh words were spoken from a distance, but yet so loudly that it seemed as if the keeper was close beside her.

Dick had half turned to obey.

"Kiss Paul, and take his memory with you, my poor boy!"

The prisoner seized the baby roughly, in his eagerness to touch with his lips the white cheek.

"Now kiss me, Dick. God help and bless you, my husband!"

The parting was interrupted by the impatient official, and Helen, her eyes blinded with tears, was spared the spectacle of grief presented by Richard Moulton, as he saw departing the woman and child whom he should have protected from all care or sorrow, and believed many years must elapse before he would meet them again.

Jerry was seated on the steps of the Tombs, with a huge bundle at his feet, and, although conscious of the fact that the time was rapidly approaching when he should be making ready to begin his afternoon's work, gave no visible signs of uneasiness at being delayed.

He needed but one glance at Helen's face, when she finally emerged from the prison, to tell him how heavy was her heart, and instead of making inquiries regarding the visit, began eagerly to explain what he had done, at the same time that he led her in the direction of their home.

"I got slats of stuff for you to work on. They did n't want to let me have it; reckon they thought I was goin' to do 'em up for the whole lot; but I would n't take talk like that. There was a cop outside what I knew, an' I made him say I was n't anybody's thief; an' I told 'em where we lived, an' who you was, — course I did n't yip 'bout this, yer know," and Jerry pointed with his thumb toward the prison. "I told 'em you was a pertic'lar

friend of mine what come to New York for yer health, an' had so much spare time you did n't know what to do with it, so thought you 'd sew, jest for fun. One of 'em said he guessed you would n't get any great 'mount of 'joyment out of the job; but I told him he did n't know you. Anyhow, here 's the outfit; looks like it would be a mighty long while 'fore you got through with it, eh?"

"It seems a large bundle," Helen said, as Jerry paused for a reply, and the latter began to have grave suspicions as to whether she had heard a word of his story.

"Big bundle! Well, I guess you 'd think so! Jest heft it!"

"Why, Jerry, how heavy it is! You must not try to carry it alone. Let me help you."

"I 'd look nice walkin' 'round the streets with you pullin' at half this stuff, would n't I? I wonder what Sam Haley 'd say if he saw me. I'll carry it alone or bust! Say, you 're gettin' inter the dumps agin. Mind I told you when you went there you must n't."

"But how could I help it, Jerry?" Helen wailed. "He is my husband, — Paul's father, and now he is to go to prison for many years."

"An' a precious good job, too!" Jerry muttered, taking care, however, that she should not overhear the words.

"He says there is no help for him; admits he has brought it all upon himself, and feels *so* badly for Paul and me."

"It would 'er been a mighty sight better if he 'd felt bad 'fore he did the thing."

"Yes, Jerry, that would have been the time; but I could not say anything harsh to him while he is in such distress."

"Say, you jest brace right up, an' don't think of him any more. You've got the kid, an' I've got you an' the kid both, so it seems as though we was mighty well fixed. Business is good; here's all the work you can do for a month, an' think how many folks there are in this town what's worse off. *We're* fine as silk!"

"I know it is ungrateful in me, Jerry. I ought n't to give way to my grief, but I can't help it."

"Don't try. I'll tell you what to do: Come right up stairs an' have it out. Here's where we live. I'll carry the bundle inter the room, an' leave. Take this money," and Jerry held out the greater portion of what had been earned during the morning, reserving for himself no more than was absolutely necessary for the transaction of business. "I'll be back a little after dark."

Master Bascomb had opened the street-door of the house in which they lived, and stood with hand outstretched for his companion to receive the collection of pennies and silver.

"You must not give me that, Jerry. I can't use your money."

"But you'll have to, 'cause I count on your buyin' grub, an' that sort of thing. Besides, I'd rather have it home than in my pocket. Kinder lay yourself out on gettin' up a good supper, and buy all the meat that kid can put down hisself."

Then Master Bascomb ran hurriedly up the stairs to the attic rooms, deposited his burden on the floor, and as he departed, Helen could hear the cheerful strains of "Annie Rooney" echoing through the desolate-looking hallway.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRIAL.

JERRY BASCOMB usually made a confidant of Sam Haley, even in such matters as he wished to keep a secret from his acquaintances generally; but since the evening when he found his "family" he had been remarkably reticent with all his friends.

Many questions had been asked, but he evaded each one, promising that he would, at some future day, give a grand reception at his new home, when both Helen and Paul should be "on exhibition."

It was his purpose to wait until a certain unpleasant event had transpired, which was nothing less than Dick's trial, for he feared, although he could not have explained why, that if his friends should become acquainted with Helen before her husband was sentenced, they would discover that which he was determined to keep a profound secret.

On the second morning after Helen's visit to the prison, he ceased business very suddenly, after glancing at the paper.

"Why, Jerry! you are so much ahead of time this morning that I have n't even begun to cook breakfast," Helen said, as Master Bascomb burst into the room like a small-sized whirlwind, his eyes gleaming with excite-

ment. "You have n't been back until after ten o'clock a single day this week, and it is not yet nine."

"Yes, I know," Jerry replied, with a considerable show of hesitation, which was so entirely foreign to him as to render it all the more noticeable. "Had pretty fair business for a couple of hours this mornin'. Say, I've struck great luck all this week, aint I? Must be twice as much money in the house as I ever had before."

"It is really surprising that you should have earned such a large amount, Jerry. I did n't suppose newsboys made more than fifteen or twenty cents a day, and yet you have brought home seven dollars."

"Fixed in great shape, I tell yer. I reckon if I wanted to loaf to-day it would n't make any difference, eh?"

"There's nothing to prevent you from doing as you choose, Jerry dear. Do you want to go somewhere?"

"Well, you see, the 'mount of it is —" Jerry hesitated, and Helen would have been a very dull woman if she had not understood that he had something weighty on his mind. "Do you s'pose I could take care of the kid while *you* went out?"

"Jerry," Helen said, in a low, quick tone, as she seized him by the arm, "you have heard something from Dick! Is he sick?"

"No, nothin' of that kind, honour bright; but see here, Helen, you won't get mad if I say somethin', will yer?"

"Of course I won't, Jerry. I know you would not intentionally do anything to wound me."

"Well, I've been kinder keepin' run of your old man

in the papers, an' I see by the *Herald* this mornin' that he 's comin' up for trial to-day, so thought you 'd want to go down an' see the thing through. I could take care of the baby, an' so long 's I 've had it pretty rich all the week, it won't make any difference if I don't work."

The colour left Helen's cheeks. Taking the baby in her arms, as if some danger threatened him, she seated herself near the table and began swaying to and fro with that same movement which had attracted Jerry's attention on the evening he first saw her.

"Now, don't do that, Helen!" he cried, pleadingly. "When I see you swingin' 'round so, seems like you was drunk, or gone crazy, an' makes me feel mighty bad. I did n't want to tell you 'bout it, 'cause I knew you 'd feel sore, but it was n't jest the straight thing to let it go past without sayin' a word. Seems like I was makin' you cry all the time."

"Oh, Jerry, don't say that! You are the dearest, best boy that ever lived, and your thoughtfulness now proves it. Of course, I knew Dick must have a trial, but this morning, for the first time since he went wrong, I had almost put it out of my mind. You and I, working here like brother and sister, to make a home for Paul, and you so kind and thoughtful, with no harsh words or disagreeable incidents, caused me to so nearly forget my true position as to feel almost happy."

Jerry stepped shyly behind the chair, and laid his hand caressingly on her shoulder.

"Say, Helen, you make a feller swell all up like he was goin' to bust when you talk this way, as if you was

dyin'. Can't you keep your upper lip stiff till it's over? I'll take care of the kid, an' you go right down to find out what they do with the old man."

"I don't want to go to the trial."

"Don't wanter!" Jerry cried, in surprise. "Why, jest think of what you'll be missin'!"

"No, Jerry dear; I had rather stay at home. You go, so you can tell me what—how long he will be away from baby and me."

"Sure you'd rather have it that way?"

"Yes, Jerry, very certain."

"Then I'll see the thing through, an' be back here as soon as it's over."

"But wait," Helen cried, suddenly realizing what was due this boy who had acted the part of her protector so manfully. "You must not go without your breakfast. It won't take many moments to prepare it."

"I aint hungry. Besides, it never'll do to wait now, 'cause it's pretty nigh time for the court to begin."

"You must not go without first having something to eat, Jerry."

"I'll take a hunk of the corn-bread you made last night."

"That is n't enough. You may not be back until evening."

"If you'd knocked 'round this town as long as I have you'd think it was enough. I could stick it out from now till to-morrer night without anything to eat, an' not feel much like cryin', either."

"But there is no need of your doing anything of the

kind now, Jerry dear, and you *must* have something more."

Helen spoke very decidedly, and Master Bascomb, as was his custom when he found her thus determined, acquiesced.

"You don't want to be any longer 'bout it than you can help," he said, as he began playing with Paul; "an' while I'm down there, you won't get to moonin' over this thing, will you, Helen?"

"I'll try not to, Jerry."

"If you try right hard I reckon you can fetch it. You see, it aint goin' to do any kind of good, an' besides, how you reckonin' on workin' an' cryin' too? Them fellers down on Lispenard Street are jest 'bout crazy to get this lot of stuff back, an' you oughter hump yourself mighty lively to-day, 'cause they'll be awful disappointed if it aint carried home pretty soon."

"Did they tell you they wanted the work done immediately?"

"They did n't say so right out, but I see from the look of that feller's eye how wild he was 'bout it, so it won't do to spend time cryin' when there's so much on hand. Why not try to hold it all back till you go down to see the old man, an' then do the job right up brown with him?"

Jerry was so earnest in making these business-like preparations for the display of grief that Helen's thoughts were distracted for the moment, and the head of the "family" had the satisfaction of seeing the expression of sadness decidedly lessened.

It was a hurried breakfast which Master Bascomb ate, and then, giving Paul a resounding kiss on either cheek, and nodding in a familiar fashion to Helen, he left the room.

At the door of the court-room he was confronted by a blue-coated policeman, who curtly informed him that only witnesses would be allowed to enter, because there were so many spectators already present.

But this did not abash Master Bascomb.

"Then I reckon I'll come in," he said, with an assumption of dignity.

"Are you a witness?"

"What else would you think I was?" he asked, with a withering look of scorn. "Do you take me for a loafer?"

"You want to be a little careful of your tongue, my son, or you'll get into trouble."

"Don't think you're givin' guff to a countryman! I know what's what, I do, so go blow yourself off for a spell."

It was seldom Jerry had an opportunity to bait a policeman at short range, and he would have lengthened the golden moments but for the fact that the impatience of those behind forced him forward.

Seating himself as near the prisoner's dock as possible, Master Bascomb gave himself wholly up to what was, in his eyes, as rare a treat as a visit to a theatre.

He listened so intently, and apparently interestedly, to all that was said, that it was impossible for him to be

more engrossed with the proceedings, when the name of "Richard Moulton" was called.

Although he could not have told why, Jerry fancied he should see an ill-kempt, desperate-looking man, when he met Helen's husband.

His surprise was great, therefore, when, instead of a person similar in appearance to those he had often watched getting into or coming out of the *Black Maria*, a neatly-attired man, with a sad and not unprepossessing face, entered the dock.

In answer to the charge, Moulton pleaded guilty, not with the air of an old offender, but of a penitent man; and it must have been that the judge, hardened though he was to similar scenes, felt a touch of pity for this prisoner who had confessed to being a burglar, for he asked in a not unkindly tone,—

"Have you ever been arrested before?"

"Once, sir, when I was sentenced to six months on the Island for stealing. I was innocent then."

"But guilty, now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is there anything you wish to say before the sentence is pronounced?"

"Nothing, sir, except that I deserve what I am about to receive, not so much because I have offended against the laws, as that I have injured deeply the best wife any man ever had."

"Have you counsel?"

"No, sir."

"Well, he's a bloomin' duffer," Jerry said to himself.

"If I'd knowed he did n't have a lawyer, I'd snooped 'round an' found somebody. What's the use of givin' yourself right up that way?"

Then Jerry leaned forward to hear what it was the judge was saying, but did not succeed, because the prisoner left the dock and walked to the bench, where the magistrate conversed with him several moments.

Master Bascomb was so impatient and indignant as to hardly be able to remain in his seat. He felt it incumbent upon him to repeat to Helen every word spoken while her husband was on trial, and yet the judge was deliberately defrauding him of his just rights as a citizen by conducting the examination in such a manner that it was impossible for him to hear what was said.

When the prisoner returned to the dock, the judge sentenced him to one year in the penitentiary, saying as he did so,—

"In consideration of the promise you have made, the penitence you display, and my belief that you will live an honest life in the future, I have given you the shortest term within my power. Should, however, you be brought before me again, I shall take good care to remember my leniency on this occasion."

"One year," Jerry repeated to himself. "Well, if he aint havin' bloomin' luck then I'm a duffer."

Had the judge made the term ten times as long the prisoner could not have appeared more despondent.

Had he been a hardened criminal he must have displayed some triumph or satisfaction at thus escaping so

easily ; but there was before his eyes always the fear of what might happen to his wife and child,—the sufferings they might be forced to endure before the twelve months expired.

An officer was leading the prisoner out of the room, when Jerry sprang forward eagerly and seizing Moulton by the hand, said in a low tone,—

“ You oughter have sand enough to hold out a year, old man, an’ I’ll see that Helen an’ the kid are took care of till you get back. Brace up, an’ have some style ’bout yer. I’ll see you through.”

CHAPTER VII.

JERRY'S ADVICE.

It was so late in the day when Jerry left the court-room that he did not think it would be very much to his advantage to go down town again until the following morning.

"Helen will be wantin' to know how the trial turned out, an', seein' s I'd have to go up to the house to tell her, I might jest as well stay there the rest of the day," he said to himself, after standing irresolutely a few moments in front of the Tombs. "I'll have a chance to watch the kid, an' that's a pile of fun sometimes."

Having once decided he would indulge in a holiday, Master Bascomb lost no time in returning to his home.

He burst into the room where Helen was industriously sewing and little Paul playing on the floor beside her, something after the fashion of a small whirlwind, crying, almost before he had opened the door, —

"Say, Helen, that Dick of yourn aint half so much of a duffer as I 'llowed he was, an' the judge must have thought so, too, for he only give him a year!"

Helen looked up with tear-stained eyes, and her lips moved nervously, yet no sound came from them.

"See here! don't act that way!" Jerry cried, in alarm. "What's the matter with yer?"

"Nothing," she managed to say, huskily. "He was sentenced?"

"Of course; there was n't anything else for the judge to do, 'cause he said he did the job. Now if I'd knowed he was goin' to come sich a chump game as that I'd skinneyed 'round for a lawyer. I'll bet eight cents he'd got clear, if the thing had been worked right."

"If a man sins he must pay the penalty which the laws inflict."

"Not if he can get out of it, an' that's what Dick might er done."

"I am very glad he honestly admitted his guilt."

Jerry was so surprised at this statement that it was several seconds before he could make any reply, and then he said, slowly, —

"If that's so you oughter be mightily tickled, 'cause he give you a great settin' out right before all hands; said he'd done more agin you than the law, an' talked in great shape. I told him I'd take care of you —"

"Did you have an opportunity to speak with him?"

"You see it was like this: Nobody give me an opportunity, but I watched my chance, an' when they was leadin' him outer the court-room I sneaked over behind the cop. There was time to say what I thought would brace him up."

"You *good* Jerry!" Helen cried, as she seized the boy by both hands, greatly to his mental discomfort. "Tell me exactly what you said."

"It was n't much, but I 'lowed it would kinder make his upper lip stiffer to know you an' the kid was all right,"

and Jerry repeated that which he had said to the prisoner.

"You are the most thoughtful boy I ever knew, and I should love you for those words even if I was not under so many obligations for what you have done to aid baby and me," Helen said, with emphasis, as she kissed Jerry tenderly.

"It aint playin' fair to tell so much 'bout what I've done," he cried, reproachfully. "Can't you see I'm gettin' the best end of this trade? Where'd I be now if you an' the kid was n't here? Hustlin' round for a cart to sleep in, or a door-way where a cop would n't see me, an' once in a while blowin' my cash in on a bed at Mother Dow's. Now I've got a reg'lar home, with a fam'ly in the bargain, and what more could I ask for?"

"That is the way *you* look at it, Jerry, but no matter what happens, I shall never cease to think of you as the dearest and most generous friend a poor woman like me could have. Tell me how Dick looked. Was he very despondent?"

"You bet he was n't no ways chipper, an' I reckon that's one reason why the judge let up on him. Then when he got only one year 'stead of five, as I allowed, it did n't seem to chirk him up a bit. He's sorry enough, if that's what you want. Now, Helen, he's all right for a year, an' you won't do him any good by cryin' your eyes out 'bout it. What you want er do is to grin an' bear it. There's the kid to keep things hummin' in the house, an' I'll take care of the money part, so there's no reason why we should n't have the highest

kind of a high old time till he breaks it up by comin' out."

"I ought to be very thankful, and so I am, Jerry dear."

"Now I did n't mean anything like that. What I want is for you to stop cryin', and have some comfort."

"So I will; and when it is possible for me to pay my full share of the expenses, I shall feel as contented as one can under the circumstances."

"I'd be satisfied if you never earned a dollar. I can get enough to keep this place goin', an' a little somethin' besides. Say, don't you an' the kid want to go to the theatre? I can get gallery tickets, an' we'll be reg'lar swells."

"Oh, Jerry! I would n't like to go, and to-night of all times!"

"What's this night got to do with—I see! You mean 'cause Dick's jest been sent up?"

Helen nodded.

"I don't know what that's got to do with it. He can't go, 'cause he's locked up; but it don't make any difference to—I mean, you would n't help him any by stayin' home."

"I should n't enjoy myself, Jerry. Why don't you go?"

"Alone?"

"Yes, or with some of your friends."

"Well, say, I'd look fine, would n't I, startin' off while you are here? What do you take me for? While I've got a fam'ly I carry 'em when I go for a good time, or else I stay at home. That's the kind of a man I am."

"Then I shall be depriving you of a pleasure by not going?"

"You won't be doin' anything of the kind. I did n't want to go, but thought perhaps it would make you feel good. I've come here to stay till mornin', an' kinder fix up the kid. It seems to me as if he might do a good many tricks if he was trained."

"I fancy he is perfectly willing to be trained," and Helen smiled, despite her great grief. "He will be glad to have some one to play with him."

Perhaps the baby would have enjoyed himself better if Jerry had not been quite so rough in his sport, for once he cried vigorously, and Master Bascomb said, with the air of a boy who has had long experience,—

"That feller has got to be toughened up, Helen. He'll never 'mount to much if he yells every time he gets hurt a little."

"He is n't old enough to understand that sort of training, Jerry. Wait two or three years, and then you will see that he can keep his tears back if necessary."

"But it's with babies same as it is with pups, you've got to break 'em in when they're young if you count on their ever 'mountin' to anything."

"But not when they're as young as Paul."

"The sooner you begin the better. Tim Foley says he begins with his dogs jest as soon as they can run round."

"A child is different from a dog, Jerry."

"I'd like to know how, when it comes to training 'em."

"I don't know that I can explain, except by saying that they must be much older than Paul before it is possible for them to understand what you say."

"I don't reckon you know as much 'bout it as Tim Foley does, 'cause Paul is the only one you've got," Jerry replied, in a tone which told he considered the discussion at an end. "I won't bother him any more for a spell, but jest set right here an' watch the little duffer."

Helen, who had stopped to soothe the baby, resumed her work, and during fully half an hour Jerry remained a silent spectator of the home-like scene.

"It's great!" he suddenly said, half to himself, startling Helen from her sad thoughts.

"What is great?"

"This runnin' a house an' a fam'ly. I reckon Sam Haley would be jest 'bout wild if he could look in here now."

"He is a very good friend of yours, is n't he?"

"Yes, something like that."

"Why don't you ask him here to see you? I would cook a good dinner, and do all I could to make his visit pleasant."

"That never 'd do till I could let all the fellers come. They're crazy to see you an' the kid; but I said it could n't be done yet awhile."

"Why not?"

"It's jest like this, Helen," and Jerry crossed one leg over the other, as he stroked his chin reflectively. "Of course, you don't want 'em to know 'bout Dick, so *that*

had to be settled. Now, if they should come very soon, they'd see how kinder glum you look, an' think I was n't treatin' you right. Then, agin, I'm countin' on buyin' you a whole slat of clothes, 'fore I flash you up very much. I've let on that you was folks of mine what had jest come in from the country, an' was mighty toney."

"Why didn't you tell the truth, Jerry?"

"That would n't do, nohow!" and Master Bascomb spoke very decidedly.

"But it is wicked to tell that which is n't true."

"Now, see here, Helen! things is different here from what they are over in Jersey, an' you don't know as much about it as I do. Leave it to me, an' everything will go smooth as oil. About next week I'm goin' to get a new dress for you —"

"I don't need one, Jerry, and shall not allow you to spend money —"

"It'll be too late to make a kick after I've done it. Take my advice, Helen, an' run this thing to suit me; it'll smooth out better. I aint any chump when it comes right down to business."

"I am willing to do whatever you wish except in the matter of spending your money for clothes. When I can earn some —"

"If you was n't so crazy 'bout that, I'd like it better. Seems to me you oughter set still an' look han'some, while I did the hustlin'."

Now Helen laughed outright, and so heartily that Master Bascomb was delighted.

"That's the way!" he cried, approvingly, and instantly Helen was reminded of her sorrows.

All vestige of pleasure left her face, and in its place came those lines of distress with which Jerry had become so well acquainted.

"I reckon I'd better hold my tongue, an' perhaps I aint so smart 'bout managin' things as I thought I was. Say, s'posen I go out an' buy a slat of stuff for supper. You can cook a swell supper, an' kinder make it look like I was company what come in for a visit."

"Should you buy toilet soap and peaches, as you did the other morning?"

"I did kinder play a chump trick then, didn't I? Say, put on your things, take the kid with you, an' all hands of us will do the buyin'. Come on! it'll do you good to walk 'round a little."

Helen understood that she could give no slight amount of pleasure to the boy who had been so kind to her by doing as he proposed, and at once assented.

Owing to the limited wardrobe owned by Jerry and his family, the preparations for a promenade did not require very much time, and very shortly after the proposition had been made the three were on the street, Master Bascomb looking as proud as a boy with a not over-cleanly face ever can look.

He escorted Helen from one shop window to another, regardless of the fact that they had come out solely for the purpose of buying provisions, and, without allowing her to think he contemplated so long a stroll, led her

into Grand Street, where Paul was speedily engrossed with the wonderful things to be seen.

"You think the little duffer aint old enough to be trained yet, eh? Jest see him with his eye on that rockin' hoss! He knows more'n you think he does, Helen, an' I would n't wonder if I could take him down town with me before long. What do you s'pose they ask for that hoss?"

"Don't, Jerry," Helen whispered, as Master Bascomb was about to enter the store. "You are not to spend money for Paul, and, besides, it would cost two or three dollars."

"I might get a smaller one."

"Paul does n't need anything of the kind. See! he is looking at something else now, which interests him quite as much."

"The hoss is what he's after, an' if I don't buy one now I will some time before long," Jerry muttered, as he led the way to another store.

It was nearly evening before Master Bascomb was willing his family should return home, and the purchases at the provision stores were made hurriedly, otherwise they would have had a very late supper.

Not until they were within a short distance of the place in which the apartments were located did either notice a very disreputable, friendless-appearing dog, which was following close behind, probably attracted by the odour of the fresh meat that made up a portion of the purchases.

"Does he belong to a friend of yours?" Helen asked,

as she called Jerry's attention to the new member of the party.

"I never saw him before, an' the sooner he gets out of this the better. Skit, you brute, or I'll —"



"HE LOOKS JUST AS I'VE FELT A GOOD MANY TIMES."

Instead of running away when Jerry raised his foot as if to kick him, the sorry-looking animal crept closer

to the boy's side, and it would have been almost impossible for Master Bascomb to deliver the blow.

"Say, Helen, this feller's in hard luck, aint he?"

"He does n't seem to have had a very easy life, and I should say he was nearly starved."

"He looks jest as I've felt a good many times," and Jerry patted the poor brute's head.

The dog tried to lick the hand which caressed him, and instantly Jerry's sympathies were aroused.

"Say, Helen, did you ever hear it was mighty healthy for babies to play with dogs?"

"I can't remember ever hearing anything of the kind."

"Tim Foley says it is, an' he oughter know. Poor old fellow!" and Jerry patted the dog's head again. "You've been havin' a tough time, eh? I know jest how it feels to get the worst of it. I would n't wonder if you could watch a house nights. Say, Helen, do you think it's jest right for you an' the kid to be alone every day? Now, if you had something like this to look out for things while I was down town, seems though it would be safer, don't it?"

"Jerry, do you want to take the dog home?"

"Well, its kinder tough to leave him in the street starvin', aint it? If he did n't look the same's I've felt many a time it would be different; but —"

"Why not adopt him? It would n't cost very much to feed such an animal, and if you think —"

"Course I do, only I'd want to know if it would be all right for the kid to have him."

"You can soon learn whether he is to be trusted."

"I'll bet he is, 'cause you never saw any feller in sich hard luck but what would try his best to square it with anybody who give him a lift. I'm mighty sorry for that dog, but I wouldn't say so much if it was n't healthy for babies to have 'em round. If he had two or three square feeds, an' was kinder cleaned up, he'd be mighty nigh respectable."

"Suppose we take him with us?" Helen said, with a smile, understanding Jerry's thoughts quite as well as he did himself. "We can at least give him a good supper, and if he does n't behave himself, you could turn him out."

Jerry's face brightened. This assisting some one, even if only an animal who was in distress, gave him the greatest pleasure.

"You're to go with us," he said to the dog, "an' if you walk straight, it'll be all right. So, mind your eye! Now come on, an' I'll give you an introduction to the kid after we get home."

Master Bascomb insisted that the animal understood him perfectly, for from that instant the animal ceased to beg, or appear in such abject distress, and followed the family with the air of a welcome guest.

"I tell you, that's goin' to be a mighty fine dog!" Jerry said, proudly, as he glanced from time to time at his new follower. "The kid will have a great blow-out with him while I'm down town. I'll train 'em both, that's what I'll do. Say, when a feller has a fam'ly, he needs a dog, don't he?"

"I suppose he does, Jerry, and now that you have one, the household is complete."

"Well, it's a great lay-out!" and Master Bascomb stepped back a few paces to gain a better view of the party. "I reckon I'm fixed now jest about as fine as a feller can be!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DOG.

WHEN the "family" entered their apartments, Master Bascomb's first care was to introduce Paul to the dog, but this was not done to his entire satisfaction, owing to fact that the latter had no name.

While Helen cooked supper he performed the ceremony by placing Paul in the middle of the floor and leading the dog around him several times, greatly to the delight of the baby, who did his best to fold the new member of the family to his bosom.

"They're goin' to be reg'lar chums!" Jerry said, in a tone of delight; "but it'll never do to let this feller go round without a name. What shall we call him?"

Helen suggested several common ones, but Jerry was not pleased with any of them.

"Everybody's dog is named 'Towser,' or 'Tiger,' or 'Lion.' What this feller needs is something different from them. He aint no slouch, that you can see easy enough, an' we must fix him out swell. Now, how do you like 'Pete?'"

"Do you think that is a very aristocratic name?" Helen asked, with a smile.

"It's way up! I'd be thinkin' of Pete Newell, when I spoke to him, an' Pete was the dandy of this town! If

he said a thing, you could make up your mind it was straight all the way through, an' he never went back on a friend. He 's dead now — got run over down on Park Row, an' us fellers humped ourselves mighty lively when we give him a funeral! Cost a slat of money; but we was bound he should have the best that was goin', an' he got it."

After this explanation, Helen agreed that no better name could be found for the new member of the family than "Pete," and the dog was formally christened by being given such a meal as he had probably not seen for many a day.

After this ceremony was concluded, Pete did not appear inclined to cultivate Paul's acquaintance. His greatest desire was to crawl under the stove for a nap, and Jerry said, as the dog stretched his nose out on his paws with a little sigh of content,—

"I know jest how he feels. Most likely he aint had a warm place for a good many nights, an' whenever he 's laid down, the cops, or some of the fellers have hustled him out. It 's as much as he can do to keep his eyes open, an' I 'm goin' to let him snooze till I go to bed, when he 'll come with me. Then he 'll think the same 's I have, when I 've been up to Mother Dow's after a long streak of bad luck."

The supper would have received more attention but for the fact that Master Bascomb was so deeply interested in Pete.

He ate his full share, however, and when Helen, the day's work concluded, sat down to rock Paul to sleep, Jerry's cup of happiness was full to overflowing.

Jerry's satisfaction with his surroundings was so great that he did not retire until an unusually late hour, and he and Helen spent the long evening discussing plans for the future.

Helen said, in the course of the conversation, that when it should be possible for her to get a sewing-machine she would be able to earn more than twice as much as at present, and without working any harder.

Jerry questioned her closely as to the price of such a machine as she desired, and the possibility of buying it on credit, but offered no suggestion as to how one might be procured, although he frequently stopped talking sufficiently long to whistle several bars of "Annie Rooney."

Now and then Pete came out from under the stove, surveyed the premises carefully, and then went back for another nap.

The second time he executed this movement, Jerry said, with what was very like a chuckle of delight,—

"That dog knows a heap! What do you s'pose he gets up every once in a while for?"

"I don't know."

"He's having sich an awful comfortable snooze that he keeps wakin' up to enjoy it. I've done that myself a good many times. Once Tim Foley let me sleep in his kitchen on a cold night, an' after he had gone to bed, I walked round quite a spell, so 's to keep awake."

"Why did n't you take advantage of the opportunity to sleep?"

"If I'd done that I would n't knowed how well I was

fixed, don't you see, an' that's what's the matter with Pete."

When Jerry finally retired he took the dog with him, and the last sound Helen heard before she fell asleep was Master Bascomb congratulating Pete upon his surroundings.

Next morning Jerry went to work unusually early, and he found it a difficult matter to leave the dog behind, as was his intention.

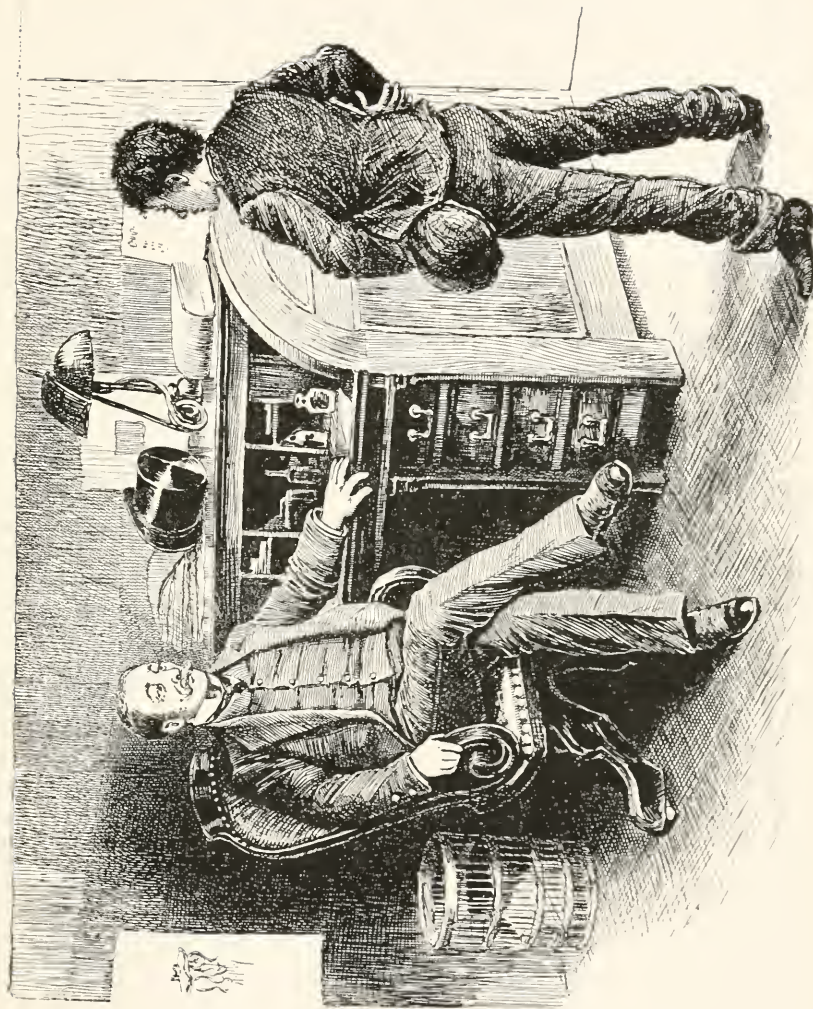
Pete seemed to think if he lost sight of his new friend he would never find another as kind, and made every effort to accompany him.

Twice Jerry very nearly succeeded in closing the door, with himself on the outside and the dog inside; but each time Pete pushed his nose through the aperture before the barrier could be closed, and finally Jerry gave him a serious lecture.

"You're not to go down town till you're in better condition, old man, an' there's no use to beg. Besides, it's part of the trade that you're to help take care of the kid; so, of course, you've got to stay. You'll like Helen after you get to know her, for she's a Jim dandy, an' it stands you in hand to make friends with her. Now crawl under the stove till the baby comes out, an' then do your level best at givin' him a good time."

Jerry kissed the dog's cold, damp nose, pushed him gently back, and closed the door so suddenly that Pete was outwitted completely.

Master Bascomb was unusually industrious on this morning, and worked an hour or more after it was too



"THE MERCHANT WAS ALONE IN HIS OFFICE."

late to do any business, heeding not his friends' advice to "come down on Frankfort Street an' pitch pennies."

Then he walked very rapidly up town, until arriving at a store on Grand Street, where sewing-machines were displayed for sale, and there he halted.

The outside of the building was first inspected by him, and then he began a scrutiny of the wares, which was not ended until he had selected the machine he hoped might one day be Helen's.

Twice he stepped forward as if about to enter the shop, and each time retreated in something very like alarm.

"See here! this won't work if I count on doin' anything," he finally muttered to himself; and, having thus revived his courage, bolted rather than walked into the building.

"Is the boss in?" he asked of a clerk, who was looking at him suspiciously.

"Mr. Mansfield is in the office at the other end of the store."

Jerry went in the direction indicated.

The merchant was alone in his office, and Master Bascomb entered boldly.

"Well, my boy, what is it?"

"I've come to see 'bout a machine for Helen," Jerry replied, beginning to feel at ease with this man who spoke in such a kindly tone.

"Who is Helen?"

"She's folks of mine what have come down from the country for her health, an' has got a job of sewin' for

a firm over on Lispenard Street. She could earn a good deal more money with a machine, an' I want to buy one."

"How much money do you intend to spend for the purpose?"

"Well, you see, that's jest the trouble, I aint got cash enough now; but I'll pay so much every day, an' Helen will put up part of what she earns."

"You want it on instalments, eh?"

"I don't care what it's on if it's the right kind of a machine, an' Helen can have it to-morrow."

"How much money can you pay down?"

"Forty cents."

The merchant laughed heartily, and before his mirth subsided Jerry was convinced he should succeed in effecting his purpose.

"How much do you suppose a machine costs?" the gentleman asked, when it was possible for him to speak.

"A good many dollars, I reckon."

"The cheapest are sold for thirty dollars."

"Thirty — what?"

"If your relative wants a good machine she should spend forty dollars at the very least, and you propose to buy it with a cash payment of one per cent."

It was several seconds before Jerry recovered from his surprise that sewing-machines were such expensive affairs, and then he was prepared with a proposition.

"It would n't take sich a dreadful long while if I paid forty cents every day, before the thing would be done," he said, half to himself.

Exactly one hundred and fifteen days."

"Where does the extra fifteen come in? Aint a hundred times forty cents forty dollars?"

"Yes, my boy; but in one hundred days are fourteen or fifteen Sundays, when, of course, no business would be done. But could you pay that amount every twenty-four hours?"

"I could if it was n't for runnin' the house, but I'm 'lowin' Helen would help out on it a pile, if she had the machine to use."

"So she might."

"Will you let her have it?"

"Of that I'm not certain at this moment; but we often sell machines on instalments, and it can be done if we have security. You say she is working for a firm on Lispenard Street?"

"Yes, sir."

"They would probably become responsible for the machine. Tell me where she lives, and I will call on her."

"But look here!" and now Jerry appeared confused. "She aint feelin' so awful lively jest now, an' I did n't count on anybody's seein' her till I'd got things fixed a little better."

"In that case you will be obliged to wait for the machine. We should not be willing to dispose of our goods with no other security than your promise."

"Could n't it be done anyway?"

"I think not."

"She wants the machine awful bad, an' if I tell you where we live, will you promise not to let on to Sam Haley, or any of the other fellers?"

"Who is Sam Haley?"

"A feller what sells papers round City Hall."

Again the proprietor of the shop appeared greatly amused, but Jerry could not understand why such a request should be considered comical, and after considerable display of mirth, the gentleman replied, good-naturedly,—

"I will promise not to reveal your secret to Sam Haley, or any other gentleman in the same line of business."

"An' you 'll 'gree to let Helen have the machine?"

"That is a promise I would not like to make until after I have had a talk with her."

"When will you go down to the house?"

"At six o'clock this evening."

"That's 'bout the time when trade is best; but it 'll be all right, for I'll go up some time this afternoon an' tell her you're comin'."

"Tell me where you live."

Jerry gave the desired information, and added,—

"Say, Mister, you 'll play fair on this racket?"

"I won't cheat you, my boy, if that is what you mean."

"I was n't thinkin' of that, for I reckon between Helen an' me we can look out for our end of the business. You 'll play fair 'bout comin', 'cause I would n't want her to go to the trouble of gettin' herself an' the kid up in style, an' you not be there."

"I will go as I have promised."

"Then I'll see you agin. So long," and Master Bascomb walked out of the office very well satisfied with his forenoon's work.

"It seems as though everythin' was goin' my way since I found Helen an' the kid," he muttered, a few moments later. "First I get three rooms what don't cost too much, an' set up a reg'lar house. Then I find Pete, an' he's a mighty good dog for a duffer like me, an' now it looks as if I'd get a machine for Helen. It don't seem right for me to have so much luck when I was n't lookin' for it. There aint another feller in this town fixed so well as I am. Hello, Joe Smith! where've you been?"

This last was addressed to a disconsolate-looking boy who had just come from around the corner, and who replied mournfully,—

"I tried to start a stand up to Harlem, an' my pardner run off with all the cash this mornin'. I aint had a thing to eat sence last night, Jerry, an' am hungry enough to chew tacks. Can't you flash up a dime till to-morrer or next day?"

"Course I can; but I'm supportin' a fam'ly now, Joe, an' must have every cent I can get. You'll pay it back outter the first money you earn?"

"Honest Injun! I'm goin' to hunt for my pardner awhile, an' then strike in down town where I used to work."

"I'll see you there to-morrer. It's time for the evenin' papers, an' I've got to hustle."

Jerry gave his distressed friend the amount of money asked for, and then went with all speed to procure his stock in trade for the afternoon's work.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ACCIDENT.

JERRY was tempted to go directly home in order to tell Helen what he had done toward purchasing a sewing-machine; but the knowledge that he was already late in beginning the afternoon's work deterred him.

"If I'm goin' round throwin' away forty dollars for somethin' to sew with, I reckon I'd better spend every minute hustlin'," he said to himself. "What with a dog, an' a fam'ly, an' a sewing-machine, it seems like as if I was gettin' considerable ahead, an' I can't 'ford to loaf as much as I used ter."

Although Jerry concluded to wait until later before informing Helen of the good fortune which might possibly be in store for her, he devoted at least ten minutes to listening to a recital of Joe Smith's troubles, as told by a bootblack friend, — Tug Jones.

"I was thinkin', Jerry," Master Jones said, in conclusion, "that seein' 's how you 've got a swell home, with your folks from the country to keep things straight, you might give Joe a big lift now."

"You mean 'cause his pardner's run off?"

"Yes."

"I've jest lent him a dime, an' it come hard to do

that, 'cause I'm flyin' so mighty high now, every cent counts."

"I was n't allowin' you 'd lend him money."

"How else could I give him a lift?"

"Well, you see, he aint got any place to hang out in, or a cent to buy papers with, 'cept what you lent him. Of course he's bound to have a hunt for his pardner, 'cause the duffer got away with 'most five dollars, an' he won't earn much for quite a spell. Now, why could n't you let him stay up to your house a week or so, an' get some of his grub there? Joe 'll pay what he 'grees to, an' your folks could figger up 'bout what it costs to keep him."

Jerry looked perplexed, and that was exactly his mental condition.

He had been allowing his expenses to increase from the day he first met Helen, until now. In case the machine was purchased on instalments, it seemed as if he was in danger of becoming bankrupt, more especially if trade should suddenly grow dull.

"If you don't want him it won't cost much to say so," Tug cried, impatiently, as Jerry remained silent.

"I jest as soon he 'd come, seein's he's in sich hard luck, but I was tryin' to figger out if I could pull through. My folks are so swell that they cost me a heap of money, an' I've been wonderin' how long I could keep up the racket. Then only last night I took in Pete —"

"Who's he? Anybody I know?"

"He's a dog, an' I reckon he's about as great as any you ever saw. He's goin' to 'stonish the folks round here before I get through with him."

"What kind of a dog is he?" and Tug appeared greatly interested.

"I aint certain; but I allow he's mostly hound, though his ears are small. He's a dandy!"

"Buy him?"

"Not exactly. I'll show him to you some day. Of course it don't cost much to keep a dog, but everything counts up —"

"Then you can't take Joe in?"

"It don't seem like I oughter. Say, Tug, it sounds kinder mean to say I can't have Joe 'cause the dog is there, don't it? I tell you what I'll do. To-night I'll ask Helen 'bout it, an' if she's willin', Joe shall come for a couple of weeks, if it busts me."

"I thought you'd fix it somehow, Jerry, an' told Joe so. Where'll I see you when trade's over?"

"On Chatham Square. I'll go there as soon as I've seen her, an' if she agrees, Joe can come to-night."

"I'll be there with him. Take care of yourself, Jerry," Tug cried, as he darted across the street, and Master Bascomb, giving vent to a sigh because of the new responsibilities he was about to assume, replied, carelessly, —

"So long, old man."

The evening papers were issued before Jerry arrived at the publication offices, and instantly his stock was purchased he became so engrossed in business that all thoughts of home affairs were driven from his mind.

"A feller what's puttin' on so many airs as I am can't 'ford to loaf much," he said, grimly, as he saw a crowd

gathering on Beekman Street, and refrained from joining it. "I don't reckon it's much more 'n a hoss what's fell down, an' it's better to earn a nickel than see him."

He worked industriously until there was a decided lull in business, and then, seeing a number of his acquaintances clustered together, walked in the opposite direction, believing he knew full well what subject they were discussing.

"If them chumps think they can make me flash up Helen an' the kid whenever they say the word, it's time some of 'em found out what a mistake it is," he muttered to himself.

The young gentlemen were not to be balked of their desires by his walking away from them.

Before Master Bascomb could cross City Hall Park, as had been his intention, the curious ones overtook him, and the leader of the party demanded that he exhibit the family.

"It's jest like this," Jerry began, halting on the curbstone. "I'm willin', an' Helen makes out she is; but it won't do yet awhile."

"Why not? What's to hinder our seein' the swell home you've been makin' so much talk about?"

"Helen aint fit to have company jest yet, an' that's a fact. You see she come to this town for her health, an' aint gettin' it quite so fast as she oughter. When she braces up a little, all you fellers can come."

"Here, for her health, eh?" one of the party asked, in a tone which Jerry fancied betokened incredulity.

"That's what I said, an' if there's anybody here thinks different, he can get his coat right off, 'cause what I say goes,—in a crowd like this."

"Tim Donovan 'lowed she was doin' sewin', an' you lugged the stuff up an' down town."

"Tim's right; she's helpin' a firm what are bound to have the best that's goin'. They pretty nigh got down on their knees coxin' her to sew for 'em. First off I wouldn't have it; but they hung on so hard, an' she said it would be comp'ny for her, seein's how she couldn't go out very much while she was huntin' up her health, that I had to give in. That's all there is to the yarn, an' if anybody don't like her style, let him step up an' tell *me* so."

"Bolivar's Ghost said as how you found her on the street pretty nigh starved to death, an' hauled her in. I mind you was out mighty early one mornin', borrowin' money."

"Jest let me ketch Bolivar's Ghost, an' I'll show him how to go 'round this town tellin' sich yarns as that! I found her on the street? There's a dozen of you fellers know I said I had some folks comin' from the country to visit me, an' when I got word she was on the way I had to hustle for money enough to hire a house. She's straight up an' up, a reg'lar swell, an' don't stay in the street starvin'. If you think she does, come down under the bridge with me for two or three minutes, an' I'll show whether it's true."

"But she *did* come outer the Tombs, 'cause I saw you waitin' for her."

"Well, what does that prove, Jip Wilson? She could n't a' been 'rested, 'less how'd she walk out? Don't you s'pose she knows anybody in this city but me? If she an' the boss keeper was old friends, had n't she a right to call on him, without you fellers howlin' it all over town?"

"Why did n't she go to stay with the keeper, 'stead of makin' a lot of bother for you?"

"I'll tell you why, Bill Jenkins, an' after this you keep your red head outer my business, or there'll be trouble. Me an' her are old chums, an' she knowed as how I'd never listen to her stoppin' with anybody else. You chumps don't seem to think a feller can have relations."

"You said she was only an old chum?"

"Well, s'posen I did! Can't she be both? You fellers are sour 'cause I won't haul the whole crowd up there, an' trot her out. Now when I get ready, an' after she's feelin' better, you can go, pervidin' I don't hear any more of this funny talk. If you get real giddy, an' I know of it, there'll be trouble. I'd jest as soon go down under the bridge this minute as not, so mind your eyes! My Helen is worth more'n a thousand sich duffers as you, an' I can prove it, or take a mighty big lickin'."

Having concluded his remarks with a threatening gesture, Jerry started hurriedly across the street, as if he saw there a prospective patron.

Exactly how it happened not one of the party could have explained, although every boy was watching him.

During a single instant they saw him threading his way amid the maze of horses and vehicles, and in another he disappeared.

"Hi! Look out there, you chump!"

"Stop! Get back, you fools; you're runnin' over a boy!"

"Pull in that team!"

"Police!"

"Whoa! Steady there! Some of you boys get out of the way!"

"Bring him this way!"

"Take him over on the sidewalk!"

It seemed as if half a hundred people had gathered in an instant, every one shouting at the full strength of his lungs, and neither paying any attention to his neighbour.

A burly, blue-coated policeman had forced his way through the throng within a very few seconds from the time Jerry disappeared, and he it was who dragged from beneath the feet of the horses what at first looked like a bundle of crimsoned clothing.

Then, as the officer's burden was laid with almost womanly tenderness on the sidewalk, a pallid face, coloured on one cheek by a tiny stream of blood, could be seen, but none would have recognized it as being Jerry's.

The alarm was rung for an ambulance; a few curious ones who were not pressed for time lingered near the apparently lifeless body, but the greater portion of the throng passed on, intent once more only on business or pleasure.

Jerry's friends were kept at a respectful distance by the officer, but they remained as if on guard until the ominous-looking ambulance arrived, and saw the mangled body placed inside.

Then the vehicle was driven hurriedly away, the gong giving its brazen warning that the race with death had begun, and Jerry Bascomb disappeared from his accustomed haunts without leaving a ripple in the tide of humanity to show he had once stemmed it as vigorously as the strongest.

Save for the hurried journey in the ambulance, the cot in a hospital ward, and a brief record of the accident in the evening papers, it was as if he never had an existence.

CHAPTER X.

SAM HALEY.

AT six o'clock, on the evening of the day when Jerry was taken to the hospital, Helen was still industriously engaged with her sewing.

The head of the family never came home before seven, and it was not yet time to begin preparations for dinner.

Paul, who had become very well acquainted with Pete, was having the jolliest kind of sport with the dog, when Helen was startled by a knock at the door.

On answering it she was surprised at seeing a gentleman who asked in a kindly tone,—

“Is this Helen Moulton?”

“It is.”

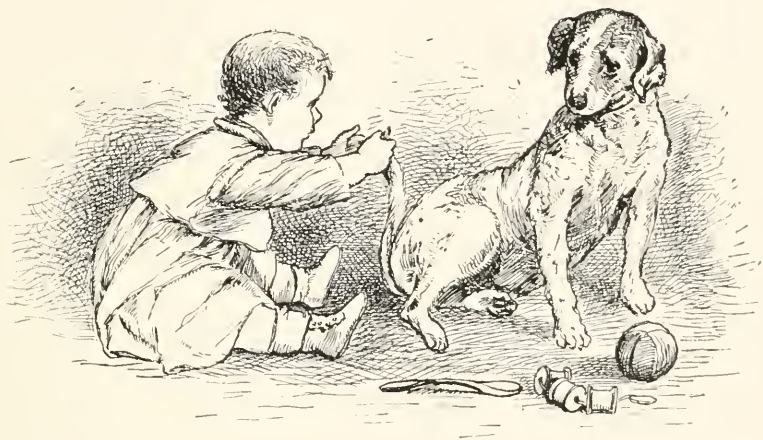
“A boy who lives here came to see me this morning in regard to buying a sewing-machine. I promised to call at six, and he said he would notify you.”

“You mean Jerry,” Helen began, as she ushered the visitor in. “He has n’t been home since morning, or I should have insisted that he save you the trouble of coming, for it is not possible either he or I can buy a sewing-machine.”

“If his story was true, I see no reason why you

should not have one," the visitor replied, and then began to explain how it would be a comparatively simple matter for Helen to become the possessor of the labour-saving device.

Before the interview came to an end, she realized that, wild though Jerry's scheme had appeared at first,



PAUL AND PETE.

it was possible to carry it into execution with but little difficulty.

She soon convinced Mr. Mansfield, however, that she could not expect the business firm for whom she worked to become surety for the machine since they had never seen her. Master Bascomb had transacted all the business with them, and she did not even know the name of the concern.

Although he had not asked for particulars of a private

nature, Helen insisted on explaining to Mr. Mansfield her position in life, not even keeping back the fact that her husband was in prison.

This information did not work to her disadvantage, however, and it was finally settled that if she would pay three dollars in cash, and not less than a dollar each week until the debt was cancelled, the machine should be sent on the following morning.

Knowing that Jerry proposed the transaction to Mr. Mansfield, Helen did not hesitate to take from his funds in her possession the amount of three dollars, and the merchant gave her a receipt for the same, promising that he would send some one to teach her how to run the machine.

Helen was lighter-hearted after this bargain had been concluded and Mr. Mansfield had taken his departure than at any time since Jerry met her. She went about the house singing, and even stopping now and then to play with Paul and Pete, all the while thinking how she might best thank Jerry for this last proof of his thoughtful kindness.

It now seemed possible she could earn a little more than her share of the household expenses, and she was determined that all over such sum should be given to Jerry until he had been reimbursed for the amount already expended.

"He shall take it in some form or other," she said to herself, with a smile at the thought that it might be possible to outwit Master Bascomb for his own good. "Of course he would refuse to receive a penny from me, but

I will buy him clothes until the debt has been paid over and over again. Dear Jerry!"

Another knock at the door; but this time Helen was not surprised, for she believed it was Mr. Mansfield, returning because of some previously forgotten detail of business.

On answering the summons, she saw a boy a trifle larger and apparently older than Jerry, who stood looking at her in a solemnly mournful manner.

"Did you wish to see me?" she asked, after waiting in vain for the visitor to speak.

"Are you Jerry Bascomb's folks what have come down from the country?"

"I am living here with Jerry."

"An' that's the kid," the boy exclaimed, as he caught a glimpse of Paul. "Well, he *is* a corker! I kinder thought Jerry was spinnin' yarns when he told 'bout him."

"Are you one of Jerry's friends?" Helen asked, as the visitor entered and began a minute inspection of Pete.

"I'm Sam Haley."

"Oh, yes! I have heard of you."

"Jerry said he was talkin' 'bout me last night."

"Yes; he is intending to invite you here to dinner some day, I believe. He has n't come home yet, but it is hardly time. I never expect him before seven."

"You won't see him so soon as that to-night, Missis."

"Oh, I understand; he has sent you to tell me that he is n't coming home until late?"

"He did n't 'zactly send me, but I thought I'd come, 'cause he's got 'portant business."

"Will he be back to-night?"

"I don't reckon he will. You see, Jerry — he's up — he won't come, that's the size of it."

"Is there anything wrong?" And now Helen began to look alarmed.

"Oh, no, nothin' like that, if you're thinkin' he might 'a been pulled. Jerry never got inter any muss with the cops; he's straight all the way through, he is."

"What did he wish you to tell me?" Helen asked, firmly, growing nervous and frightened as her visitor became more and more confused.

"That's the trouble, he did n't want me to tell you anything, 'cause I could n't get to see him."

"Could n't see him! Where is he?"

"Up to the horspital."

"Hospital!" Helen cried, her face growing very pale. "Has there been an accident?"

"Now, see here, Missis, you must n't get inter a stew. Bolivar's Ghost said as how you would n't make a row if I kinder hinted at what was the matter, an' I haint even done that yet."

"Jerry has been hurt! Tell me what happened," and Helen took Paul in her arms, hardly conscious of what she was doing.

"He got run over quite a while ago, an' we had to hunt a good bit before we found where he was livin', else I'd been here an hour sooner."

"Is he hurt seriously?"

"He looked like he was dead when they lugged him off; but up to the hospital a man said as how he hoped he'd pull through."

"Only hoped?"

"That 's what he said."

Helen rocked to and fro, as if to quiet the baby, and Pete, who seemed to understand that one of his new friends was in distress, sat down in front of her, wagging his short tail vigorously, as if to say he would do all he could toward aiding her in the trouble.

Sam Haley looked, as he probably felt, thoroughly uncomfortable. If Helen had given way to noisy grief he could have understood better what was in her mind; but this silent sorrow perplexed him.

"It's jest like this, missis," he began, hesitatingly. "Jerry was an old pardner of mine, an' I stand ready to help him through, 'cause he'll pay back every cent a feller puts out on him. Now tell me what you want done, an' I'll 'tend to it right up to the handle."

Helen made no reply, and Sam gazed toward the door, as if thinking it would be wisest for him to beat a hasty retreat.

"Jerry aint dead yet, you know, an' he's tough enough to pull through if the odds aint too heavy."

"Can I see him if I go there?"

"I don't reckon you can. Mornin' would be the best time, for I saw on a card, 'Visitors admitted from ten till twelve.'"

"Where is the hospital?"

"Do you know your way 'round this town?"

"I never was here before."

"Then there aint much chance you could find it. Say when you want'er go, an' I'll be here to show the way."

"Will you come to-morrow morning at half-past nine?"

"Sure."

"And if you are not too busy, could n't you go there again to-night and ask some one to tell you exactly how he is? Say one of his friends —"

"I'll go, an' I'll jest give 'em the truth, that it's his folks what want'er know."

Sam did not linger. He feared Helen might give way to more violent grief than any she had yet displayed, and had no desire to be a witness of it.

Without stopping to learn if there was anything else she wished done, he left the room hurriedly, leaping down two or three steps at a time, until in his descent of the staircase he literally shook the crazy building.

On the sidewalk stood four friends, and instantly he appeared in the door-way each asked eagerly, —

"Did you see her?"

"She's there, sure enough, fellers, an' Jerry aint been givin' us no fairy stories."

"The kid, too?"

"It's jest as Jerry said, an' now I've got to go up to the hospital again."

"Did she cry?"

"Not a bit, but she acted awful funny, an' I reckon she's broke up mighty bad 'cause he's hurt. Say,

Jerry's been havin' it rich, an' no mistake. You oughter see that place! Why, swell aint no name for it!"

It was necessary Sam should describe in detail everything he had seen, and repeat each word of the conversation, before his companions would allow him to do as Helen wished, and when there was absolutely nothing more to be told, the entire party decided to accompany him.

"When we get back I'll go in an' tell her 'bout Jerry," Bolivar's Ghost said, calmly. "I wanter see what she looks like."

"Well, you won't find out while *I'm* round!" Sam cried, angrily. "I'm tendin' to this job, an' I'll see it through."

"I don't reckon you can stop me."

"I'll try mighty hard, an' we'll see who'll get the best of it. You're allers stickin' your nose in where you don't belong, but that game won't work this time."

"You don't own Jerry Bascomb's home, or his folks."

"That's all right if I don't. I went there first, an' I'll be the one to keep on goin' till he comes back hisself."

Master Haley seemed so determined that Bolivar's Ghost thought it prudent to drop the subject, more particularly since it had been demonstrated to his painful satisfaction, on more than one occasion, that Sam was his master in the art of boxing.

"See here, fellers," Master Haley said, after they had walked on in silence several seconds, "I reckon some of us will have to chip in an' help Jerry's folks if he stays

in the hospital very long. I don't allow he had any big pile of cash, an' places like his can't be run on wind."

The response to this remark was not so hearty as he had expected. Fully a moment passed before any one spoke, and then it was Bolivar's Ghost, who said with a cackling sort of laugh, —

"I reckon if we take care of ourselves it'll be enough. I don't go very strong on tryin' to help other folks swell."

"That's a fact, you don't. A feller who counted on you to pull him through would come out mighty slim; but there's some others who'd be glad to turn in when things was like they are. Jerry Bascomb allers put out every cent he could raise if somebody else was in a fix, — he was *too* soft that way, an' it'll be funny if us fellers can't do as much for him."

No reply was made to this remark, and Sam did not venture to bring up the subject again. He had resolved what he would do in regard to Jerry and Helen; but nothing could be effected by making the resolution public at this time, more especially since none of his companions appeared to be generously inclined.

Arriving at the hospital, the boys had not a little difficulty in gaining the information which Helen desired. Had Sam been less persistent the mission would have proved a failure; but he insisted that he had been sent by Jerry's "folks" to learn the exact condition of the sufferer, and was finally told that the patient had even chances for life, but no more. The opinion of the surgeons was that it would be necessary

to amputate one of his legs in the morning, and the attendant said with much needless emphasis that no one would be permitted to see him for several days.

"S'posen his folks come here, can't she get in?" Sam asked, incredulous, despite the very positive statement.

"His father would n't be allowed to speak with him until he is either better or worse."

"Then I s'pose that settles it, eh?" and Sam turned to his friends.

"I s'pose it does," Bolivar's Ghost, replied, feebly, and the party turned their faces homeward.

"Looks like Jerry was in mighty hard lines, don't it?" Sam asked, when they were some distance from the hospital.

"It does for a fact. If they cut his leg off, he don't stand much show of ever doin' any business again."

If they had been told that there was no hope of the patient's recovery, the condition would not have seemed so desperate; but to be thus maimed, and forced to earn a livelihood or starve, was the height of misery.

"Poor old Jerry!" Sam said, in a whisper.

"I'd like to see his leg cut off," Bolivar's Ghost added.

"I'll show you 'bout how much it hurts," Sam cried, angrily, as he struck at his companion, but missed his aim. "The idea of you wantin' to see Jerry when his leg is bein' cut off!"

Sam's grief was at that point where it could readily be changed to anger, and he began in a most energetic fashion to pummel Bolivar's Ghost, who yelled for help.

Not one of the party would lift a hand in his defence ; all seemed to think he deserved the severest possible treatment for having made such a remark, and but for the sudden appearance of a policeman, the young gentleman would have suffered severely.

CHAPTER XI.

A PROPOSITION.

IN the mercantile world of which Jerry had been a prominent member it was soon known that the victim of the accident on Park Row would lose one of his limbs, if not his life, and great sympathy was expressed by nearly all who knew Master Bascomb.

There were a few, it is true, who intimated that in this case pride had had a fall, and that a fellow who would be so extravagant as to "start inter reg'lar housekeepin' with a woman, a kid an' a dog," should expect that disaster in some form would overtake him sooner or later.

During this first evening after the accident more than one of Master Bascomb's acquaintances thought it would be to their advantage and Helen's benefit if they took Jerry's place in the household, but Sam Haley put a veto on all schemes of the kind, thereby making enemies for himself, without accomplishing the purpose which had been in his mind.

He had hoped he might induce a certain number of Master Bascomb's friends to agree to contribute a stated amount every week toward the support of the home, in the absence of the head of the family.

Before morning he realized that it would be impos-

sible to so far enlist the sympathies of Jerry's acquaintances that they would be willing to give money.

Three or four only were ready to do as he proposed, and promised all the assistance in their power, while a few intimated that they would advance Helen a small sum if Sam Haley guaranteed it would be repaid.

This last offer was scornfully rejected, and those who had agreed to do as Sam desired were so few in numbers that but little could be effected,—certainly not sufficient to warrant a promise that the household bills would be paid by subscription.

Sam was discouraged, but not wholly disheartened, and on the following morning, when the first rush of business was over, he called upon Helen.

"I thought I'd come up to see if there was anything I could do," he said, when she answered his timid summons at the door.

"You are very good, Sam, and if I am not allowed to see Jerry for some time, it will be possible for you to give me considerable assistance."

"There's no chance of seein' him, 'cordin' to what the man said last night."

"Will you show me where Lispenard Street is?"

"Course I will. When do you want to go?" and Sam coaxed Pete to his side, feeling more at ease while talking with Helen if he could pretend to be playing with the dog.

"Very soon. Jerry has been getting work for me from some firm down there, and I do not even know the names of the people. Is it a very long street?"

"Nothin' to speak of."

"Then I'll go there and inquire at every store where such goods are sold."

"I'll find out all you want ter know, an' not half try. There aint no call for you to go."

"I'm afraid you will be spending too much time."

"Now don't worry 'bout me. I've come up here to stand by you while Jerry's in the horspital, an' if you aint got cash enough to see you through with this house, I'm willin' to put up half I earn."

"Thank you, Sam. I fully appreciate your kindness, and after knowing Jerry I am not surprised that such a proposition should be made by one of his friends; but I shall not need assistance if I can continue with the work. Before he was injured Jerry made arrangements for a sewing-machine, and if I can learn who it is I am working for, I shall be able to get along famously."

"Jerry bought a machine, eh?" Sam exclaimed, half to himself. "That feller's a daisy! I reckon he'd try to buy the City Hall if he believed anybody what he knowed wanted it."

"He is the kindest boy I ever knew, and generous to a fault."

"You can bet he is; there aint any flies on Jerry. Say, don't you want to send back some work to that place?"

"A little."

"Then I'll take it now. There's no need of makin' two trips when one will do the business."

Helen made a neat package of such articles as were finished, while Sam played with the baby and Pete, and when this was done she said, —

“If you can find the firm —”

“Don't you bother but I'll do that.”

“Tell them I am to have a machine this morning, and will be able to sew very much more than I have been doing, if they care to give it to me.”

“I'll 'tend to the job in great shape. Say, are you countin' on livin' here alone till Jerry gets out of the hospital?”

“I think it will be my best plan. I want to do that which would please him best, and am quite certain he would feel badly if he thought the home had been broken up.”

“I reckon he would; but it'll cost a pile of money to run this place, won't it?”

“I should be able to earn sufficient. The rent is not high, and I can live here as cheaply as anywhere else.”

“I was thinkin' — I don't reckon but what Jerry had a room to hisself?”

“Oh, yes; he slept there,” and Helen pointed toward the apartment which Master Bascomb had last occupied.

“Now, I was thinkin',” Sam continued slowly, apparently finding it difficult to put his thoughts into words. “I was thinkin' — say, if you could let that room, it would help things along, would n't it?”

“I should n't like to do that. It would seem to Jerry as if I had turned him out of the house, and when he

has recovered sufficiently to be able to see visitors, I want to tell him that nothing has been changed since he was here. He is the only one who has the right to say what shall be done."

"That 's where you 're correct," Sam replied, with a long-drawn sigh, as he arose to his feet. "I d be willin' to pay a dollar 'n a half a week; but of course what you say settles it. "I reckon that 's a mighty fine dog!"

"Jerry thought so, and he certainly is a great deal of company for the baby. They are firm friends already."

"I reckon you would n't want to sell him?"

"He belongs to Jerry."

"Yes, I see!" and another proposition was checked before it could be made.

The arrival of two men with the sewing-machine put an end to the interview, and Sam hurried away with the bundle of clothing.

When, an hour later, he returned, Helen was at work with the labour-saving device, and Paul and Pete were having a merry time on the floor with a doll of rags.

"Hello! Gettin' right down to it, eh?"

"It is a machine with which I am already acquainted, therefore it was n't necessary to spend any time in learning how to run it. Did you find the firm?"

"Course I did. That 's what I went for, an' I don't allow a little job like that is goin' to stump me. I've brought back a slat of stuff, an' there 's plenty more when this is done."

"How good of you, Sam, to spend your time on me!"

"I'd be willin' to do twice as much for Jerry's folks. What else have you got on hand?"

"Nothing now, thank you."

"Don't want me to take the dog an' the kid for an airin', eh?"

"They were out nearly an hour shortly after daylight, and I don't think I should dare trust you with Paul."

"I reckon I can do as much as Jerry could."

"But I never thought it safe to let *him* go on the street alone with the baby. Boys mean well, but they are inclined to think children can be trusted to a greater extent than is absolutely safe."

"Well, if Jerry could n't do it, I don't reckon I can. I'll go up to the horspital now, an' see if there's anything new."

"Will you stop here on your way back?"

"Sure!" and Sam hurried out of the room without any formal leave-taking.

When he presented himself once more it was with sad news.

The surgeons had decided it was necessary to amputate Jerry's injured limb without loss of time, and the operation had already been performed. No information regarding the patient's condition could be obtained until the following day.

Master Haley took his final leave of Helen, promising to call every morning when the trade in newspapers was over, and she was left to attend to her work and the baby at the same time, as best she could.

On the next day Sam brought better news. The invalid had begun to show signs of improvement, and it was believed at the hospital that he would recover.

Twenty-four hours later this report was confirmed. Jerry continued to improve as rapidly as could be expected under all the circumstances, and there was no longer any immediate danger of death.

Sam carried the finished work to Lispenard Street, and brought back another supply, much to Helen's relief, for her greatest fear now was that this source of earning money might suddenly come to an end.

When Sam returned to his usual place of business after this second visit to Lispenard Street, he met Joe Smith and half a dozen acquaintances, who, quite naturally, asked regarding Jerry's condition.

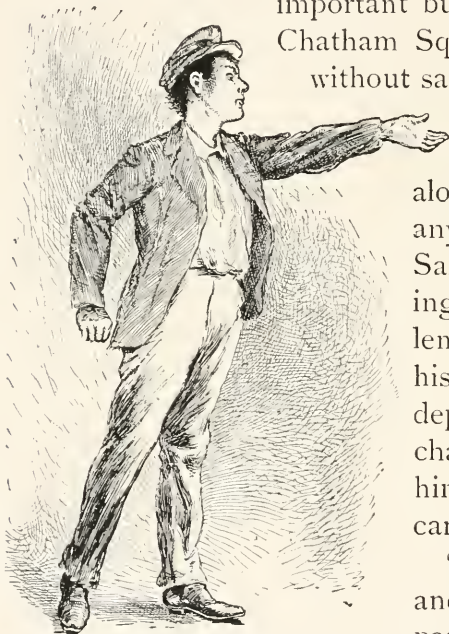
"He's pullin' through," Sam replied, curtly, for since his unsuccessful efforts to obtain pecuniary assistance for Jerry and his "folks," there had been a pronounced coolness between himself and his friends. "I reckon he'll come out all right, but it's goin' to be mighty tough for the poor little duffer to be hobblin' round on one leg, like old Simpson."

"I guess he won't brag so much 'bout runnin' a swell home with folks from the country, after this," Teeny Brown suggested, and Sam cried, angrily,—

"Say, you're a nice one to make that kind of talk 'gainst a feller what give you the last cent he had in his pocket when you was down on your luck, an' had n't had a square feed for a couple of days. That's what Jerry Bascomb did for you, an' I know all 'bout it,

'cause I found Jerry sleepin' under the bridge that night, an' he said he didn't have any money. You was snug enough up to Dyer's lodgin'-house blowin' in his cash."

Master Brown suddenly remembered that he had important business in the vicinity of Chatham Square, and hurried away without saying farewell.



"YOU WAS SNUG ENOUGH UP TO
DYER'S LODGIN'-HOUSE!"

"Is there any other feller that's been helped along by Jerry what's got anything to say agin him?" Sam asked, angrily, breaking the almost painful silence which had come upon his friends after Teeny's departure. "Now's your chance to jump down on him, 'cause he's fixed so he can't help hisself."

"What's goin' on here?" and Tug Jones joined the party. "How's Jerry Bascomb?"

"Goin' to get well, I reckon," Sam replied, curtly.

"How long before he can come out?"

"Two or three months."

"Months? Well, that's tough! Say, can't us fellers do somethin' to help him along? Seems like as if after all he's done for them as was in hard luck, he ought'er have what he wants."

“ Did he ever help you ? ” Sam asked.

“ He would if I ’d asked him.”

“ That ’s jest it ! Them he put out money on are the very ones what aint willin’ to chip in now ; but decent fellers are ready to come up. See here, Tug,” and Sam motioned Master Jones to a convenient door-way, where the two remained in private conversation a long while.

“ Sam Haley thinks he ’s runnin’ this end of the town. I wouldn’t wonder if he ’d made up his mind to live with Jerry ’s folks,” Bolivar’s Ghost suggested, and a friend replied,—

“ That can’t be his game, ’cause he ’s jest gone in with Bill Upton over on Orchard Street.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE INVALID.

THREE weeks passed without bringing any great changes, save in Jerry's condition.

Sam Haley called at the hospital every morning with the utmost regularity, and each time received an encouraging report regarding the invalid.

Helen was succeeding far better than she had dared to hope, thanks to the sewing-machine, and at no time since the accident had she been without a sufficient amount of money to meet current expenses.

Paul and the dog were the best of friends, and Pete had surely earned his livelihood by amusing the baby when Helen was engaged with the sewing.

Finally the day came when Sam burst into the house, his eyes gleaming with excitement, and breathing heavily, like one who has been running a long distance.

"You can go to see him to-morrer mornin' at ten o'clock," he cried, almost before the door was opened. "That duffer up to the horspital jest told me so, an' I said you'd be there!"

"That is good news indeed!" Helen cried, growing nearly as excited as Sam. "It not only means that we shall see him at last, but that he is no longer believed to be in danger."

"I reckon you'll want me to go up there with you?"

"I don't think so," Helen replied, and Sam looked decidedly disappointed. "I have been thinking what I should do when the time came that I could see Jerry, and have concluded it would be unwise to take Paul with me. Besides, it is quite possible they would not allow him to go if I should be so foolish as to carry him. Now he and you are good friends, and I think you might take care of him, if you are willing to do so, while I am away."

Master Haley's face lighted up again very quickly.

"Of course I'll do it. There won't be much work 'bout' takin' care of one baby."

"Not if you let him do nearly as he pleases. Don't allow him to see you are trying to keep him quiet, and there will be no trouble."

"I'll be here by nine o'clock. Take care of yourself," and Master Haley left the apartment quite as rapidly as he had entered it.

The clock had not yet struck nine on the following morning when he knocked at the door of Jerry's home.

"I thought I'd get here a little early so 's you'd have plenty of time. It'll take 'bout half an hour to ride up to the hospital, an' it aint certain how long you may have to wait for a car. Is the kid feelin' all right?"

"He is in the best possible humor, and I don't think he will make much trouble. Pete keeps him amused most of the time, and appears disposed to do so this morning. It surely seems as if that dog understands that he can be of service by playing with the baby, and he does his duty faithfully."

"He's a great pup. I'll bet Jerry will be s'prised when he sees how fine he looks. Pete is worth twice as much as he was when I first saw him."

"He has improved—"

"I should say he had! There wasn't much of anything to him but skin an' bones when Jerry picked him up, an' now he's mighty nigh respectable. Say, how long do you s'pose it'll be before Jerry will come home?"

"I don't know how soon a patient can be removed after such an operation, but it seems as if it could n't be a great while before we shall have him with us."

By this time Helen was ready to set out, and Sam gave the most explicit instructions as to the direction to be pursued.

Then she in turn advised him as to how the baby could best be kept quiet and contented, and it was well Sam did arrive early, for each had so much to say that when she finally left the house there was barely half an hour remaining before the time set for her visit.

Thanks to what Sam had told her, she had no difficulty in finding the car which would carry her nearest the hospital, and it was only a few moments past ten when she entered the ward where Jerry had already spent so many days.

One of the nurses led her to that portion of the room where the victim of the accident was lying, and before he was aware of her arrival she noted with dismay that the injuries were not confined to the limb which had been amputated.

"It was a very serious accident," the nurse said, as she saw the expression of surprise on the visitor's face. "There were many days when his life literally hung in



"MY POOR JERRY!"

the balance, and even now several of the surgeons do not believe he will ever be entirely well again."

The tears were in Helen's eyes as she went quickly

to the side of the cot, not daring at first to trust herself to speak.

"Hello, Helen! How'd you find me? I did n't reckon you'd know where I was," and the bandaged patient, who could make no other signs of greeting than turn his head slightly, gazed at his visitor with a sigh of content.

"My poor Jerry!" and the woman kissed tenderly the pallid lips, which even then were quivering with pain. "My poor boy!"

"Now you must n't go on in that style," and despite all his efforts the tears would persist in filling Jerry's eyes to overflowing. "It aint so very bad for me, 'cause I don't 'mount to much anyway; but what's goin' to become of you bothers me a sight. How'd you know I was here?"

"One of your friends — Samuel Haley — came to the house and told me of the dreadful accident. He has been here every day during the past three weeks; but this is the first time they would allow anyone to see you. If I could only have been here at the time of the operation, it seems as if I might have helped you bear the pain."

"Did the chumps tell you I had to have my leg cut off?" Jerry asked, angrily.

"Yes, my poor boy; and I wish I could say how sorry I am for you."

"So they had to tell you, eh?"

"But, Jerry, why should n't I know of it?"

"I s'pose you'd have to some time; but I wanted to

hang off a spell till I'd figgered what I could do to keep things movin' after they let me out. I reckon you'll give me the dead shake now, Helen?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"You won't want to have a one-legged duffer hangin' round where you are. But p'rhaps I can fix up some way to earn money —"

The words were interrupted by a kiss, and the visitor said, reprovingly, —

"Jerry, it is wicked for you to talk in that manner. Do you suppose your misfortunes could have any other effect than to make you dearer to me?"

"But it'll be kinder tough to earn much money when I can't hold my own with the other fellers."

"You are to come straight to me, Jerry, as soon as it is possible to be moved, and it will be my turn to provide the home. While I live you shall never want for anything which I can give you. It is only twisting matters about, Jerry," she added, with a smile. "When I was in sore distress you took care of me, and now I shall do the same by you."

"I won't hang onter any woman, like I was a kid," the invalid replied, almost roughly.

"Surely you can't feel that way with me, my poor boy. Did I refuse to let you help me?"

"That was different, 'cause you counted on doin' your share."

"And so can you, Jerry. Just as soon as it is possible to take you from here, and the doctors think you may be carried to our home in two weeks more, I shall

be your nurse, and you don't fancy of how much assistance you will be to me in my work."

"Are you sewing for them fellers on Lispenard Street?"

"Yes; and the gentleman whom you saw just before the accident sold me a machine on instalments, so that now I earn quite a lot of money."

"How'd you know where the clothin' fellers was?" And Jerry looked up suspiciously.

"I told Sam Haley you got the material from Lispenard Street, and he succeeded in finding the store. He has carried the bundles back and forth, and I am promised all the work it will be possible for me to do. You can't fancy how much I have earned."

Jerry's face was growing more stern in expression each moment.

"Where's Paul?"

"At home. Sam Haley is taking care of him while I am here."

"Oh, he is, eh? Seems to me Sam Haley's tendin' to a heap of things. I could n't do much more'n touch the kid, when I was round; but Sam can take the whole care of him."

"Now, Jerry," and Helen kissed his lips several times, "I really believe you are jealous of Sam. Do you think for a single moment that he could fill your place?"

"I s'pose he's livin' there, aint he?" and there was no softening of the voice.

"Indeed, he is not, Jerry. It is *your* home, and your room shall not be occupied by anyone. I have kept it

exactly as when you were in it last. Sam has been very good to me ; but it was only because he was your friend. *He* never would have spent his last cent to give baby and me a shelter when we were homeless — ”

“ How do you know ? ”

“ Because he has said several times that you had no right to throw money away as you did. Sam would hesitate a long while before befriending a stranger ; but he is a true friend to you.”

“ Say, Helen, do you s’pose the folks here would let me see him ? ”

“ I think so. Visitors are only allowed at certain times, but I am quite positive he could come to-morrow morning.

“ Will you send him up ? ”

“ Yes, Jerry.”

The invalid was silent during fully a moment, and then asked, abruptly, —

“ Has Sam been givin’ you money ? ”

“ No.”

“ You aint earned enough to pay the rent and buy grub ? ”

“ Yes, I have, Jerry. You know I had all your money, and that I used in making the first payment on the machine, and to pay the rent. My wages have amounted to considerable, now that it is possible to do so much, and I’ve quite a sum on hand ; it does n’t cost a great deal for what food Paul and I need.”

“ I s’pose you’ve been jest ’bout starvin’ yourself to death, eh ? ” And once more the suspicious look came into Master Bascomb’s eyes.

"Indeed I have n't, Jerry. We have had plenty of wholesome food," Helen replied, but failed to add that in order to earn it she had been forced to work eighteen hours out of every twenty-four.

"I know I'm makin' a reg'lar hog of myself, Helen; but I can't help it. I was mighty proud of you an' our swell home, an' when I got knocked out like this, it seemed like as if I would n't never come to time agin. Sam's all right, of course, but I don't care 'bout havin' him hang round there, takin' care of the kid, an' puttin' on airs 'bout it."

"He shan't come again, Jerry, if you don't wish it."

"But I do, 'cause I can't help myself. You've got to have somebody to lug the stuff down to Lispenard Street, for *you* shan't amble round with a big bundle, an' he's the one to do it. Say, Helen, you won't think I'm a chump 'cause I've only got one leg, will yer?"

"Jerry, I love you as dearly as if you were my brother, and your misfortunes only serve to make you more dear."

"Then, if I did n't have *any* legs, you'd be reg'larly mashed on me, eh?"

"My boy, you must not be jealous or suspicious any more. When you are in your own house again, you will see that you are the head of the family, as before; and I am certain, Jerry, we can devise some plan whereby you can earn as much money as you ever did."

"Now you're talkin' jest to make me feel good. A chump with only one leg never could earn enough to

keep him; I'm 'most certain I can't. Say, what did you do with Pete?"

"He is at home, Jerry, and it will please you to see Paul play with him. I am surprised, sometimes, when I realize of how much assistance he is in amusing the baby."

"No! Is that so?" and Jerry looked decidedly pleased. "I knowed he was a mighty fine dog, but I never 'lowed he was smart enough to take care of a kid."

"I fancy he is doing more in that direction this very minute than Sam is, for your friend does n't seem able to attend to a child like Paul as you can."

Jerry looked up suspiciously an instant, as if to make certain Helen was not saying this simply to please him, and what he read in her eyes caused the cheerful look on his face to increase each instant.

"I don't reckon you know how Joe Smith got along? The day I was hurt I'd almost the same as agreed he might come to our house while he was in sich hard luck, an' I'm 'fraid he thought I went back on him."

"Sam told me Joe had found his partner, who returned a portion of the money he ran away with, and Joe has taken the stand at Harlem again."

"I'm glad of that. I've been wondering how he come out, an' was kinder 'fraid he hadn't pulled through."

"Don't allow yourself to worry about others, Jerry dear. I am quite certain Joe would have got along in some way, even if he had not been so fortunate as to

get back a portion of his money. It is time for me to go now, because if I stay too long this time the doctors may not allow me to come again to-morrow. Have n't you anything to send the baby?"

"What do you mean?" and Jerry looked up in surprise.

"Wouldn't you like to give me a kiss for him?"

Jerry hesitated; then tried to raise himself in the bed, and Helen asked, —

"What is it you want, dear?"

"Is there anybody lookin'?"

"Only one of the nurses."

"Then I reckon it won't do to send the kid anything."

Helen laughed so heartily that Jerry decided she was prettier than ever, and, bending over the bed, covered the invalid's face with kisses, a proceeding which caused him no slight amount of mental discomfort.

"I will send Sam to-morrow, and come myself after he gets back, for we can't leave Paul alone, and probably shall not be allowed to bring him in here. Good-by. for a few hours, Jerry dear, and don't think of anything but the home-coming, when you will be master of the household, with nothing to do but enjoy yourself, for we are to get along famously on my earnings."

CHAPTER XIII.

A CEREMONIOUS CALL.

THE news-merchants in the vicinity of City Hall Park were greatly excited when they learned that Sam Haley had received an invitation to call at the hospital on the following day.

Nearly every one wished to send some message to the invalid, and had Sam undertaken to deliver them all, the time allowed for the visit would have been fully occupied, to the exclusion of everything else.

At least a dozen of his acquaintances announced their intention of going with him to the hospital, and waiting outside until the call had been made, but he was averse to any such demonstration.

"How would it look for a mob of us to trail up there?" he cried, impatiently. "Folks 'd think we didn't know enough to last us over night, an' most likely never 'd let me in to see Jerry agin. You stay here an' tend to business till I get back; I'll tell yer how he's lookin', an jest what he says."

Such an arrangement was by no means satisfactory; but Sam had a way of enforcing obedience which was not at all agreeable, and no one dared rebel against his decision.

It was not yet nine o'clock on the following morning

when he took leave of his friends before going up town, and promised for at least the tenth time to repeat faithfully everything which Jerry said.

He was not admitted until the visiting hour, and then, contrary to his expectations, no especial excitement was caused by his arrival.

After answering the questions which were asked as to the reason why he wished to see the patient, he was given in charge of a nurse, and escorted to the ward Helen had entered the day previous.

"There is Jerry Bascomb," the man said, after walking nearly the entire length of the large room, and pointing to a bed in the corner.

Sam hardly recognized, in the pale, thin, bandaged boy, his friend, and stood several moments as if not daring to approach the bed.

The nurse had stopped to speak with some one, and Sam, after nervously looking around several times, went forward in a hesitating manner.

Master Bascomb's eyes were open, but he did not greet his friend, save by an expressive wink, and Sam opened the conversation.

"Hello Jerry!"

"How are yer, Sam!"

"The kid's mother said you wanted to see me."

"I dunno's I did very much. I only thought if you was loafin' round this place it would n't do any harm to look in."

"That's what I've done. How are you feelin'?"

"Kinder brisk sometimes. How's business?"

"Can't kick. Big murder helped the fellers out Monday, but it 'll get dull if somethin' else don't happen mighty quick."

"What 'er the fellers doin'?"

"'Bout the same's ever. Bolivar's Ghost run up agin a *Italian* last night, an' pretty nigh got the head thumped off 'er him."

"Did the *Italian* really fight?" and now the invalid began to show signs of interest.

"I reckon not much. You know the Ghost aint very spry on his feet, an' I guess the dago chucked him down an' jumped on him. Say, its kinder tough on you, havin' to lay here when you'd jest started sich a swell house."

"You bet it is! I s'pose you're over there a good deal, eh?"

"I go up every mornin' to see if the kid's mother wants anything done, that's all."

"Why don't you sleep there?"

"Now you've struck it, Jerry," Sam began, confidentially, heeding not the fact that Master Bascomb had spoken sharply. "I wanted to do that very thing, an' offered to pay a dollar 'n a half room-rent; but she would n't have it."

"Why not?" and the frown began to leave the invalid's face.

"She said as how it was your house, an' she did n't have no right to take lodgers. I 'lowed you'd rather have that room of your'n bringin' in a little somethin' every week than for it to lay empty; but she said there could n't nothin' be done till you was home."

"Did she really say that?" Jerry cried, eagerly, his face lighting up with pleasure.

"I dunno's them was the very words, but that was what it 'mounted to. I could n't get in here to see you 'bout it, so I went with Bill Upton, over on Orchard Street."

"Got a good place?"

"It's fair; but of course it aint a marker to your'n."

For the first time the invalid appeared to be friendly. Up to this moment he had spoken gruffly, scrutinizing his visitor intently, as if suspecting him of having done some wrong, and, in fact, held him at a distance, as it were. Now his manner was changed, and he said, in a kindly tone,—

"You've been mighty good to Helen, Sam, an' if I ever get 'round agin I'll make it up to you somehow."

"Oh, that's all right. When they said you'd have to stay here quite a spell, I thought she oughter know 'bout it; an' seein's how she's a stranger in the town, kinder looked out for her by carryin' the bundles, an' that sort of thing. She's a dandy, straight through!"

"Don't you s'pose I know that? Say, Sam, do you think she's got all the boodle she needs?"

"It looks that way; but if you're 'fraid she aint, an' are willin' to stand good for it, I'll let her have some."

"No; that's all right. I only wanted to know how it seemed to you."

"The kid looks like he got all he needed to eat, but she don't act first-class all the time; I s'pose that's 'cause you got inter this scrape."

"Yes, I reckon it is," Jerry replied, hesitatingly, and again looked at his friend scrutinizingly, as if to ascertain whether he had any idea of the true condition of affairs.

Master Haley must have been a consummate actor if he was possessed of information which he wished to conceal from the invalid. He appeared to be the personification of innocence, so far as Helen's affairs were concerned, and Jerry gave vent to a sigh of relief.

"Say, that's a mighty good dog of yourn."

"You bet he is. I reckon it would n't be hard work to learn him lots of tricks. That's what I was countin' on doin' before I got hurt."

"The kid an' he play together like a couple of puppies. I don't see how that youngster ever got along without a dog before he come to your house."

"That was what he needed; but, you see, his mother didn't know. I s'pose the dog follers you same's he would me?"

"I don't know; I never tried it. She never let me take the kid in the street, an' of course I could n't run the pup out an' leave him behind."

Again Jerry looked relieved.

"Say, Sam, you aint been botherin' Helen 'bout her folks in the country, have yer?"

"What do you take me for? Course I aint."

"That's all right; don't get on your ear. She aint very well,—down here for her health, you know, an' I was 'fraid you might say somethin' 'bout where she come from that would make her feel bad."

"You know I would n't do anything like that, Jerry."

"Course I do. She never said anything to you, I s'pose."

"Nothin' 'bout her folks. You see, I don't have much time when I go there, an' if it does happen that I can loaf a spell, I mostly play with the kid."

Jerry now appeared to be in a very agreeable frame of mind. All his doubts and fears were set at rest, and he was at last prepared to enjoy his friend's visit.

Sam looked at him earnestly an instant, then around the room to make certain no one was sufficiently near to overhear his words, and asked, in what he intended should be a careless tone, —

"Say, they tell me you had your leg cut off?"

Jerry nodded.

"How'd it feel?"

The invalid remained silent several seconds, and then asked, angrily, —

"See here, Sam Haley, have you come to poke fun at me?"

"Course I aint!" and Sam looked thoroughly astonished.

"I reckon a good many of the fellers will, when they see me peggin' round, an' I want it settled right now, that my arms are both here, an' I'll thump the head off er the one what tries to be funny with me."

"Now don't get on your ear 'bout that, 'cause I don't 'low any one of our crowd will play that game. Why, say, old man, they all feel mighty bad to know you're used up in sich a shape. When you git out

agin you'll find the whole lot tryin' to do you a good turn."

"Is that so really, Sam?"

"Course it is. Every day, 'most, one of 'em asks me if you've got money enough to see you through this thing. You allers had sand, old man, an' all hands of us will stick by you."

"You're white way through, Sam."

"That's what I count on bein'."

"An' say, you don't hold anything up agin Helen 'cause she did n't let you have my room?"

"Not a bit of it. After I'd turned the thing over I 'lowed it would n't been so terrible fine for me, 'cause I'd had to get in early nights, an' its even chances she'd tried to made me a reg'lar dude. I hadn't seen her twice before she asked if I did n't want to wash my face. She's way up, old man, but 'cordin' to my way of thinkin' it would be better if she was n't quite so swell."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, she's allers scrubbin' an' dustin' of that kid, an' I bet she combs his hair, too, three times a day. That's what I call frills. It's healthy for a baby to be dirty, so Ike's mother says."

"Helen don't mean anything by them freaks of hern. I s'pose she was that way when she was little. Say, Sam, you keep your eye on her while I'm here?"

"Sure!"

"An' if she goes broke lend her what she wants, on my 'count?"

"Every time."

"An' if the fellers ask 'bout me, say I'm chipper's a sparrer?"

"Yep."

"Then I reckon you'd better mosey along. It's 'bout time for them doctors to come snoopin' round, an' they won't let you stay."

"I don't 'low I can see where your leg was cut off?"

"It's all tied up, an' I can't get at it."

"Do you know what they did with the other part?"

Jerry shook his head.

"Did it hurt?"

"I didn't know anything 'bout it till the job was done. They give me somethin' to make me sleep while they was whittlin'."

"An' you could n't feel it a bit?"

"Not till a good while after they was through."

"Well, so long, old man."

"Take care of yourself, Cockey."

And Master Haley walked out of the hospital with the air of a medical practitioner.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOME-COMING.

Two weeks had not quite elapsed since the date of Helen's first visit to the hospital when she electrified Sam Haley, who had been caring for the baby while she visited the invalid, by announcing,—

“Jerry is to be brought home to-morrow.”

“To-morrow! What?”

“The physicians believe, as I do, that he will improve more rapidly here, and have agreed that he shall be sent at eleven o'clock in the forenoon.”

“Jerry comin' back!” Master Haley repeated, as if it was extremely difficult to credit the good news. “But say, how 'll he get here? Has he got crutches?”

“He is n't able to walk yet, and I have promised that he shall not be allowed to attempt anything of the kind for many days. He will come here as he went there—in the ambulance.”

“What did he say when you told him?”

“Not a word; but there was that in his face which showed how pleased he was. Jerry is n't a boy who says very much when he is the most deeply moved.”

“Yes, he allers had a mighty quiet tongue in his head; but when he did n't talk I knowed he was keepin' up a

mighty big thinkin'. Then he never so much as said he was glad?"

"No. I didn't learn the good news myself until I had started to come away, and then I went back and told him. There was no need of words, so far as I was concerned."

"Well, say, we'll have to give him the loudest kind of a *reception*, an' I'd better be gettin' the fellers in shape for it."

"Wait a moment, Sam," Helen cried, as Master Haley, seizing his cap and papers, was hurrying towards the door.

"Don't keep me any longer'n you can help, 'cause we've got a pile to do 'tween now an' to-morrer noon," Sam said, impatiently, halting with his hand on the doorknob.

"I want to prevent you from doing anything of the kind."

"Do you mean you don't want us to give Jerry a *reception*?" Master Haley asked, in surprise.

"It is exactly what you must not do."

"Why? What's the matter?"

"The doctor says he must be kept very quiet, and especially cautioned me against allowing him to see too many of his old friends until after he had been at home several days."

"Do you count on his comin' back with only one leg, an' our not seein' him?" Sam cried, in an angry tone.

"You will see him, but not on the first day, and there

must be no excitement of any kind when he arrives. It might do him a most serious injury."

"But, you know, *I'd* have to see him."

"Not the first day, Sam. Now, listen to me, and remember that I am simply trying my best to carry out the doctor's instructions. Don't come around the house to-morrow, and attend to it that your friends keep away. If you will do that, you shall be welcome on the day following, and take dinner with Jerry. I will have something nice, and you two may eat alone, as if you were guests in a hotel."

"Do you promise that none of the other fellers shan't get in ahead of me?"

"Certainly I will. You shall be the first to welcome him, and I depend upon you to prevent the others from coming until he is stronger, and better able to see company."

"It seems too bad that it can't be fixed," he said, regretfully, "for we'll never have so good a chance to do what we was countin' on; but if you say so, I s'pose that settles it."

"There will be plenty of time in which to carry out any plans you may have made, for, unfortunately, Jerry's recovery is not likely to be rapid."

"We'll look out for him like he was eggs," was the confident reply. "Now, if you don't want me to do anything else, I'll jest 'bout set the fellers wild by tellin' 'em the news."

"I can attend to everything until the day after to-morrow, and then you will come again."

"Yep. So long!" and Master Haley ran out of the room as if every second of time had suddenly become very precious.

It did not require many moments, after he had arrived at his customary place of business, to begin the task of "settin' the fellers wild."

Once he had made the announcement that Jerry Bascomb was to leave the hospital on the following day, all the news-merchants who knew or had ever heard of the invalid were in a state of the highest excitement.

Before nine o'clock on the following morning gentlemen who were in the custom of buying papers from the sidewalk merchants had good cause to be surprised at the sudden disappearance of these enterprising dealers in news.

In the vicinity of City Hall Park hardly a boy was to be seen, and the Italian bootblacks were reaping an unusually rich harvest.

People living near the hospital must have been surprised at the sudden influx of boys. It was as if a convention was being held, and the janitor of the institution, who fancied he understood the cause of the unusual gathering, muttered to himself, as he made certain the gates were securely barred,—

"It's well for me we don't have many newsboys as patients. My life has been almost worn up this past two or three weeks answering questions about the lad whose leg was amputated, and if he was going to be here very much longer I'm not certain I wouldn't



"COME ON, FELLERS!"

resign. There's some mischief on foot now, or I'm mistaken; but that crowd shan't get the best of me."

The curious ones were obliged to wait a long while before the ambulance drove out of the yard, and then they could not so much as catch a glimpse of the occupant.

"Come on, fellers!" Tug Jones shouted, as he started at full speed after the swiftly-moving vehicle. "We can get there 'bout as soon as it does, an' we'll see him when he's took out."

The boys followed their leader, and a most exciting chase, so far as the pursuers were concerned, took place through the crowded streets.

Sam Haley was not among those who followed the ambulance. He believed it would be breaking faith with Helen even to go to the hospital gates, and had remained down town, quietly attending to business, while his friends and acquaintances wasted nearly the entire forenoon.

Even after so great an expenditure of time and strength, the boys did not fully satisfy their curiosity.

The hospital attendants lifted Jerry quickly and deftly from the vehicle, and the rear ranks of the pursuers were yet a block or more away, when he disappeared up the narrow stairway.

"I saw him!" Bolivar's Ghost shouted, triumphantly.

"I could see him best, 'cause I was on the other side; an' the feller nearest me, what had hold of the bed, was so small I could almost look over his head," Tug retorted.

"How'd he seem?" some one asked, and Master Jones replied, gravely, —

"Come down the street a bit an' I'll tell yer. I reckon Sam Haley an' Jerry's folks was right when they said we must n't make a row round here."

"Is he very sick?" a member of the party asked, impatiently, when the breathless throng was so far from Jerry's home that their conversation could not by any possibility disturb the invalid.

"Sick? I should say he was! He looked like he was more'n half dead already. I tell you what it is, fellers, Jerry Bascomb's in a mighty bad way."

"There's plenty of folks what have their legs cut off an' then get well."

"It's more'n Jerry's leg that's the matter with him. His face looks like he'd been runnin' up agin a street-sweepin' machine. We'd better get back to work, an' after this when Sam says we must keep away from that place, I won't say a word."

"I'm bound to have one good look at him, no matter how sick he is, an' Sam Haley can't stop me," Bolivar's Ghost cried, emphatically.

"You won't do anything of the kind, young feller," and Tug clenched his fist, threateningly. "You'll keep away like the rest of us,—that's what's the matter with you."

There was little danger Jerry would be troubled with visitors after Tug had thus plainly defined his position in the matter, and Sam, learning what had been said, thought it his duty to thank Master Jones.

"If you'll keep on that way, Tug, we can fix Jerry jest as his folks want it done, an' she'll be awful glad to know how you set down on the other fellers."

"I never'd made any kick if I'd knowed how bad he was, Sam. Does she think he's goin' to die?"

"I don't believe so. She said he'd get better quicker if he was home where she could take care of him."

"It'll be a long spell before we can do what we're countin' on."

"We shan't lose anything by waitin'."

"No, I s'pose not, 'less he should up and die, an' then our money would be 'bout the same 's wasted."

CHAPTER XV.

AT HOME.

ON the morning when Jerry was to return from the hospital Helen had been almost recklessly extravagant, in order that everything might be prepared for the coming of the master.

Near the window stood a cheap but comfortable "invalid's chair," which had been purchased the afternoon previous, and on the table was a bouquet of flowers, hiding from sight the bowl that had been made to do duty as a vase.

Helen had but just completed her preparations when the sound of heavy footsteps on the stairs told that the invalid was about to enter his "swell" home.

Helen opened the door just as the hospital attendants reached it, with their charge on a stretcher. Pete began to bark a noisy welcome; Paul laughed and cooed gleefully as he crept forward, regardless of the injury which might be done his dress, and the master was beneath his own roof once more.

Jerry's face was flushed, and the quivering lip told that he was exerting himself to the utmost to keep back the tears which betokened his joy at being once more with those whom he loved.

Helen, understanding what was in his mind, limited

her welcome to a fervent kiss; but Pete was not willing to allow the occasion to pass in such an undemonstrative fashion. He leaped upon the boy who had given him a home, trying frantically to lick his hands, and it was necessary he should be restrained in order to prevent causing pain.

Holding him in her arms, Helen allowed the dog to greet his master, and before this had been done to Pete's satisfaction, Paul crept up for his share of caresses.

"Kiss him once, Jerry," Helen said, as she lifted the baby with one hand, restraining the energetic Pete with the other, and when the invalid had thus been welcomed home, the child and the dog were placed in the opposite corner of the room, with strictest injunctions to "play quietly while Jerry had an opportunity to rest."

Master Bascomb did not trust himself to speak for a long while. He leaned back in the chair, as if very weary, and watched eagerly the movements of the three who made up his own especial "family," while Helen began her preparations for dinner.

Twenty minutes passed, and then Jerry said, suddenly, in a tone of most perfect content, —

"Say! This is jest like that heaven the swells talk of goin' to, aint it? I'm goin' to look round here to-day an' take in all I want to of the place, so 's I can remember it when I'm gone. Bolivar's Ghost was down by the door when I come up with the ambulance. I wish I was strong enough to thump the head off er him!"

"Why, Jerry dear, you should not be thinking of doing such terrible things when you have just gotten home after so long an absence."

"But he was loafin' round, so's he could tell the boys how I looked with only one leg, an' by this time he's down town makin' fun of me,—that's what *he's* doin'."

"I think you wrong your friends in that respect, Jerry. They have no idea of making sport because you met with such a sad accident. I am certain Sam Haley talked as kindly and sympathetically as any person could have done, and seemed to feel very badly because you were crippled."

"Course he could n't talk any ways different to you; but I know how the fellers carry on. I allers thought it was great sport to chase old Simpson round an' make fun of him 'cause he didn't have but one leg. Now I've got a pretty good idea how he felt when he used to shake his crutch at us. They don't want to say much where I can hear 'em, or they'll think I've got more'n a dozen legs, the way I'll tackle the crowd," and Jerry shook his clenched fist in the air.

"You must try to overcome such feelings, my boy. It is n't to your discredit that you are in this condition. Now, tell me, did it hurt you to ride down from the hospital?"

"Not a bit. That ambulance was jest like feathers all the way, but I'm a good deal better'n you think, if my face *is* white. I don't see what made me fade out so bad. I look like a sick chicken."

"Almost any one who had undergone such suffering

would show the effects of it; but now you are home once more, Jerry, I shall soon have you looking as well as ever, and perhaps when the summer is here, we shall be so wealthy that you and Paul and I can go into the country."

"Yes, it looks a good deal like you was goin' to git rich, don't it? You've been workin' yourself right down to dry bones, tryin' to keep this place runnin'. Now you think I'm goin' to lay back on you, eh? No use tellin' *me*; I know, and Sam Haley said he 'lowed you'd been at it pretty nigh all the nights. Say! its mighty nice here, aint it?"

"It is, now that you have come, Jerry; but there were times when I was very lonely. You talk as if you fancied I am to do all the work. That is a mistake, my dear. I could accomplish twice as much but for the necessity of taking care of Paul, and that portion of the task you can do without difficulty; therefore we shall both be busy, and you will be earning as much as I."

"You're stuffin' me now, 'cause you think it'll make me feel fine. Well, it won't go down. I set a heap by you, Helen, an' there was a good many times in the hospital when I made up my mind I'd come right out, no matter what the doctor said, 'cause I was 'fraid you war n't gettin' along same 's I wanted you to."

"But, Jerry dear, you can see we have n't suffered for a single thing, and the rent is paid a fortnight in advance. I can readily earn four dollars a week, and at the same time take care of Paul. Now you are home, I expect to do twice as much work."

"It's mighty nice here, aint it?" and Jerry looked around with an air of pride.

"Yes, dear, it is very pleasant with you at home again."

"Say! heard from your old man?"

"I have had one letter, and, do you know, Jerry, I firmly believe he will lead a different life when he is free once more."

"Course he will. I thought he was a reg'lar duffer 'fore I went down to the trial; but he talked right up as though he had sand, an' when he told he'd done more wrong to you than he had by bein' a burglar, it counted. That's the time Dick bit three years outer the judge's ear, 'cause he stood to go up for four, anyhow. I reckon you'll be livin' in this place when he comes back?"

"Unless you and I should get a little home in the country, Jerry."

"It's mighty nice here, aint it?"

"Yes, Jerry, but why do you keep on repeating that?"

"I wanter take it all in to-day. You know that's what I'm here for, is to get what comfort I can outer this thing 'tween now an' to-morrer mornin'."

"To-morrow morning? Won't the rooms look just as pleasant to you the next day, and the next, and the next?"

"It'll seem the same when I think of it."

"Jerry, what do you mean?"

"Now, see here, Helen, I reckon there's goin' to be a

fuss; but I've figgered this thing all out, and don't want you to yip after I git through talkin'. You mustn't think I'm a chump what don't know when to pull down my vest, 'cause I aint. I've knocked round the world long 'nuff to know where I belong, an' I'm goin' to get there to-morrer mornin'."

"Jerry, what do you mean?"

"I'm goin' off to-morrow," and Jerry spoke very loudly, as if to give himself courage. "You'll get along first-class with nobody but the kid, an' Pete, an' yourself to look out for, an' when it comes to havin' me layin' round, a one-legged duffer what aint worth the powder to blow him inter Jersey, why, it can't be. You've had all the trouble what belongs to you, Helen,—that's what's the matter,—an' I aint goin' to make more for yer."

"But you will be making more if you talk in this way, Jerry."

"Say, Helen, I don't want you to start a row in that style, 'cause it breaks me all up. I've been figgerin' this thing out ever since they whittled me down, an' know jest what I oughter do. I've got to go off somewhere, an' that settles it."

"Where do you think you could go, my poor Jerry?"

"That don't make any difference to you or me, either. I'm bound to keep out er sight, that's all. I won't set round the house while a woman pays my bills."

"Now, Jerry dear," and Helen kissed the white, quivering lips tenderly, "you—"

"I 'lowed you'd come that kind of a game," Jerry

cried, struggling to release himself from her embrace, "an' it aint givin' a feller a fair show, 'cause I feel bad enough 'bout goin'; but it's got to be done, an' there's no need of makin' it any worse."

"It has n't got to be done, Jerry, and it *shan't* be done. Do you remember the night when you spent every penny you had to provide Paul and me with a bed and supper, and the next morning before daylight went around borrowing money to pay the rent of these rooms?"

"Who's been tellin' you that yarn? It's some of Sam Haley's work, that is. Jes' let him come here a minute, an' I'll knock his two eyes inter one, givin' sich guff 'bout me 'cause I aint got but one leg, an' he thinks I can't handle myself. I'll show him!"

"Jerry! Jerry! you must not be angry with Sam, for he did n't intend to tell me. I don't think he really knows he did give me so much information. I questioned him closely at different times, until I had the whole story, and he could n't avoid answering me."

"What's the reason he could n't? What's the reason he could n't up an' lied 'bout it? I'd done as much for him. I allers thought Sam was a friend of mine till now; but I'll have it out with him, leg or no leg."

"We won't talk about it just now, Jerry. I want you to remember the time when you did all this for Paul and me, and that I did not refuse to allow a boy to provide me with food and shelter, but took gratefully that which was offered. Now, I only ask you to do the same thing by me. I have planned that we were to

live together until Dick came back and made a home for us all, you helping me with the work. In looking forward to the day when Paul's father would be an honest man in the eyes of the world, and you a loving brother, I have believed I should be very, very happy. Would you destroy that dream, Jerry?"

Master Bascomb turned his head with what might have been mistaken for an angry gesture, dashed a thin, white hand across his eyes, and struggled without success to prevent a sob from escaping.

"I knowed there was goin' to be somethin' of this kind,—I knowed it; but you see, Helen, there aint any other way for me. I'd hate myself if I hung round here an' saw you workin' for me."

"But I did n't hate you, Jerry, when you were doing the same thing for me."

"That's different. You're a woman, an' women allers count on things like that."

"You can't go away to-morrow, Jerry," Helen finally said, with a smile. "You are so feeble that it was necessary for the attendants from the hospital to bring you up the stairs, therefore you must put all this out of your mind until you can move about alone."

"I'm a bit stronger than you think for."

"But not sufficiently so to walk from here to the street. Now, do this much for me, dear: remain as contentedly as possible until you are strong once more. Help me as I have suggested, and believe that in so doing you are performing your full share of the work. Then we will talk more about this foolish plan."

"Will you promise not to make this kind of talk agin, if I stay till I'm well?"

"I hardly like to do that, dear."

"It's 'cause you're countin' on gettin' the best of me!" Jerry cried, fiercely.

"No it is n't, my boy; I'll promise! But you should, on your part, agree to talk with me about it before you leave. Now I am going to cook dinner, and have planned for a regular feast in celebration of your home-coming. Sam Haley wanted to call this afternoon, but I told him he must wait until I had had you one whole day to myself."

She bent over to kiss him again, and he, throwing his arms around her neck, cried, in a voice choking with emotion, —

"You're a jim dandy, Helen, an' it's a mighty big shame there was ever a one-legged duffer saddled onter you."

CHAPTER XVI.

BROTHER MERCHANTS.

Sam was very prompt in keeping the engagement made for him by Helen, and on the day after Jerry's home-coming, at an hour so early that breakfast had but just been eaten, he entered the "swell home."

"Hello, old man!" the invalid cried, cheerily, and Master Haley replied in a tone of indifference, —

"Got back, eh?"

"Yes, come yesterday."

"How er you feelin'?"

"First-class."

"I reckon you 'll have a chance now to show Pete some tricks?"

"I'm goin' to start in on him to-morrer. Say, how's all the fellers?"

"They're great. I s'pose you knowed they was comin' up to see you this afternoon?"

"That's what Helen said. She told me you was goin' to stay to dinner."

"I some thought of it, — that is, if nothin' turned up 'tween now an' then."

"Been to work to-day?"

"No; did n't have time."

"Why not?"

"Well, you see, I had somethin' else to 'tend to, an' thought I'd loaf one day."

"Trade good?"

"Only fair."

At this point the conversation ceased, and the two friends amused themselves by watching the baby and the dog until each felt more at ease, after which Sam gave the invalid a detailed account of all that had occurred since the day he was taken to the hospital.

Helen kept faithfully the promise she had made Sam.

A veritable feast was prepared in the way of dinner, and when it was served she insisted upon acting the part of waiter, much to Jerry's displeasure.

"Why don't you sit down here an' eat?" he asked, sternly.

"Because I promised Sam that you and he should have a dinner served as it would have been at a restaurant."

"But we don't want that kind; Sam aint puttin' on frills when he comes to see me."

"'Course I aint!" was Master Haley's emphatic reply.

"I prefer to do this," Helen said, laughingly, as she deftly changed the plates, in order to serve a savoury meat stew after the broth. "Paul and I will have all the more time for our own dinner, and to-day both you and Sam are guests."

Jerry cast a sidelong glance at his companion to ascertain if he was fully aware of the great honour which was being done him, but just at that instant Master Haley was so deeply engrossed with the tempting

delicacy before him as to be wholly unconscious of everything else.

When the meal finally came to an end, because it was absolutely impossible for Sam to eat anything more, the boys continued the conversation regarding business affairs until Jerry asked, —

“Are the other fellers comin’ up to-day?”

“The whole crowd of ’em will be here ’bout two o’clock. Tug Jones is bossin’ the business —”

“What business?” Jerry asked in surprise.

“Why — you see — somebody’s got to keep the fellers straight, aint they?” Sam managed to say, after considerable difficulty, for the knowledge that he had nearly betrayed what was to be kept a profound secret confused him not a little.

Thus far he had refrained from saying a word regarding his friend’s misfortune, for he understood that the subject was not a pleasant one to the invalid; but this slip of the tongue rendered him forgetful of all other matters, and he asked, after a painful silence, —

“What er you countin’ on doin’ when you get out doors agin?”

“Say, Sam, that ’s what ’s botherin’ me a good deal,” Jerry replied in a whisper. “I don’t count on bein’ able to sell papers if I’ve got to hobble round on a crutch, an’ what else is there for me to do?”

“You might start a stand.”

“Yes; an’ I might go to Chiney, but I can’t.”

“It would n’t take sich a dreadful sight of money,” Sam replied, reflectively.

"An' I'm dead broke. If it was n't for Helen I would n't have a place to sleep in."

"Don't you s'pose it could be raised among the fellers?"

"No, I don't. When I could earn as much as anybody else, it was all right for me to borrow. If I got hard up; but I could n't do it now that I aint sure of payin' it back."

"You could do it easy enough if you got a good stand."

"But I might have a bad one, an' *then* what would happen? I've been thinkin' it over, Sam, but it won't do nohow, when you come to look at how many chances there are of my failin' up in the business. You see —"

Jerry was interrupted by the sound of many feet on the stairs and in the hall-way, and Sam sprang toward the door as he cried, excitedly,—

"The fellers have come, an' if Tug Jones —"

A resounding knock caused him to open the door, and, as he did so, Jerry looked up in a surprise which almost amounted to bewilderment.

The invalid saw on the threshold Tug Jones and Joe Smith, each holding a bulky parcel wrapped in white paper, and as far along the hall-way as the eye could reach was a double line of his brother merchants, all trying to peer into the room.

"Here's Jerry's folks," Sam said, with a flourish of the hand, toward Helen, who was advancing to meet her guests, and then he stepped back lest he should obstruct the invalid's view.

The visitors advanced in couples, and were, apparently, trying to execute some manœuvre under the direction of Master Jones, but anything like concerted movement was impossible, owing to the press of numbers and the diminutive size of the rooms.

"It's no use, fellers!" Tug shouted, so loudly that Pete began to bark furiously. "We'll have to give up marchin' round Jerry, but every feller can come here an' do his work like we 'greed, 'cept that there musn't be any crowdin'."

The small apartment appeared to be literally packed with guests, and an anxious expression came over Helen's face as she realized that a



"TWO ENORMOUS CAKES."

grave mistake had been made in extending such a general invitation.

"We was countin' on comin' to see yer at the hospital, Jerry," Tug began, when the confusion had subsided sufficiently for him to make himself heard by all, "but there did n't seem to be any show for the whole gang; an' seein's how pretty nigh every feller has chipped in a little, it would n't er been the fair shake to do this thing when the crowd was n't round. We wanted to buy somethin' to show that we felt mighty bad 'cause you got hurt an' lost your leg, so here she is!"

At the same instant Tug and Joe Smith uncovered the packages they held, displaying two enormous cakes, ornamented with a scanty amount of icing, and a plentiful supply of tinsel.

"First off we did n't know what to buy," Tug continued, after depositing his burden on the table. "It did n't seem right to get anything your folks could n't have part of, an' cake was 'bout the only thing that struck us. Every feller here has given money toward buyin' 'em, Jerry, an' they 're to show how sorry we are for yer."

Helen, who was watching the invalid closely, saw a deep crimson flush come over his face, and the pale lips quivered ominously.

It is probable Jerry would have broken down completely, greatly to his mortification, but for the fact that the remainder of the party gathered around him, each with some small token of regard,—a broken-bladed

knife, a peg top, bolivars, candy in every form, and exceedingly sticky from having been carried so long in the owner's pocket, apples, peanuts, and, in fact, every delicacy which could be procured from a street-vendor's stock, were piled on the table in front of Jerry, until it seemed as if every inch of its surface was covered.



"EVERY DELICACY WHICH COULD BE PROCURED FROM A STREET-VENDOR'S STOCK WERE PILED ON THE TABLE."

While this was being done the invalid remained silent, and Helen, understanding full well how difficult he was finding it to restrain his feelings, created a diversion by introducing Paul and Pete to the visitors.

The baby, enticed by tempting offers of candy, went readily from one to the other, much to the delight of

all, and by the time each of the visitors had squeezed his hands, as if to make certain he was a real flesh-and-blood child, Jerry recovered a certain amount of composure.

"It was mighty good of you fellers to think of me enough to bring sich a slat of stuff," he said, hesitatingly; "an' if there was a show I could ever square things, I'd promise—"

"We don't want you tryin' to square this racket, old man," Tug interrupted. "I reckon you thought 'cause we didn't come up to the horspital that we'd forgot all 'bout yer; but Sam said it could n't be done, nohow, so we did n't try. That's a mighty fine dog of yourn."

"You should see him playing with the baby," Helen cried, merrily, as she saw that Jerry was again struggling with his tears, and instantly each of the visitors began trying to persuade Pete to display his ability to take care of a child.

As a matter of course Pete would do nothing of the kind, and before the boys were tired of coaxing, some of Jerry's more intimate friends were giving him an account of the doings in the 'commercial world in which they moved.

Helen exerted herself to please these kind-hearted friends of Jerry's, and so far succeeded that nearly every boy present was ready to make oath that she was the "finest in the land."

Bolivar's Ghost was the only fellow not ready to surrender entirely to her charms; he stood aloof, watching her critically, until Joe Smith asked him in a guarded whisper, —

"What 'er yer moonin' round like this for?"

"I was kinder keepin' my eye on Jerry's folks. I'll bet she aint more 'n half as sweet as she acts."

"Well, s'posen she aint, what business is it of yourn?"

"He's cracked her up so high that I was bound to find out all about her, an' I'm doin' it."

"Oh, you are, eh? Well, look here, young feller, you wanten come down off er your perch mighty sudden, or the fellers in this crowd won't make it very comfortable for you. She's a daisy,—that's what's the matter with her, an' if you know of any chump what wants to say she aint, jest tell me, will yer?"

The Ghost promised very meekly that he would give the desired information in case he became possessed of it; and then, fearing lest he might make unpleasant and disagreeable enemies by trying to discover flaws in Jerry's "folks," acted quite like a rational being during the remainder of his visit.

Helen took good care the guests did not stay longer than the time specified.

When half an hour had elapsed, she told Sam the visitors must depart, and he repeated the words to Tug.

The room was cleared as if by magic. In less than three minutes from the time Helen spoke to Sam every guest had gone, leaving Jerry and her gazing first at each other, and then at the store of gifts with which the table was literally laden.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LETTER.

As the days passed, Jerry grew more despondent regarding the enforced idleness, and Helen realized that there was little possibility of his improving until he was so situated as to be able to earn money.

He no longer seemed pleased to see Sam, and apparently lost all interest in the outside world, for he ceased to ask questions concerning his business acquaintances. When Master Haley proposed that "the fellers have one more chance to make him a visit," Jerry positively refused to invite them, declaring that they should not "make a dime museum out of him."

Finally a happy thought occurred to Helen.

After a few lessons the invalid would be able to sew buttons on the garments she was making, and thus his hands might be employed.

The only difficulty which presented itself was that possibly he might refuse to do "woman's work," and she approached the subject very carefully; but, to her great surprise, he was delighted with the idea.

"I'll be willin' to do anything that'll bring in money," he said, decidedly. "Show me how, an' I'll risk but I can shove her through all right."

"Of course you can, and you will be doing fully half the work."

"You don't want to try an' make me believe anything like that, for I've watched you often enough to know how much time it takes; but it'll be bringin' in a little somethin', an' I'll feel a good deal better."

Jerry was an apt pupil, and in half an hour after the first attempt could do the work passably well.

Once he had some real employment he became more cheerful, although there were times when the gloomy thoughts came to him; but these intervals were so far apart that Helen began to have great hopes he might finally fight off the depression which retarded his recovery.

Instead of making any attempt to hide the work when Sam paid his regular visits, Jerry boldly proclaimed what he was doing toward "helping the fam'ly along," and displayed no slight amount of pride in showing how deftly he could handle a needle.

"That's great!" Master Haley said, enthusiastically. "You folks will be gettin' along in fine shape now, an' I would n't wonder if this was better than tryin' to run a stand."

"It surely is until Jerry grows stronger; we have earned two dollars more this week than we did last, and it has only been five days since he began," Helen added, cheerily.

As the time wore on, however, the invalid was not as contented with his work, and once more began to be sensitive regarding his condition.

"Say, it's been three weeks since I come outter the hospital," he said, looking up sternly from his work.

"Yes, dear."

"An', 'cordin' to that chump of a doctor, I aint any more fit to go out doors than when I come here."

"That is what he says, Jerry dear, and we know it is true, for when you tried to walk on your crutches the length of the hall-way yesterday, it was too great an undertaking."

"I wished I could er kicked my head off for bein' sich a baby!"

"It is n't babyish to acknowledge your own weakness, especially when it proceeds from such a cause," and Helen left the sewing-machine to kneel by the invalid's side, for she understood from the expression on his face that he was falling into one of those moods which the medical adviser had warned her against allowing. "Put from your mind all thoughts save that you are with Paul and me, earning your share of the household expenses."

"But the others will come, Helen, no matter how hard I try to keep 'em back. When the fellers are here I'm kinder ashamed to have 'em see me doin' women's work, but I know I could n't go into the old business yet a while. If I was n't cock sure I'm doin' somethin' to help, I'd crawl out an' hide myself, same's cats do when they're sick."

"Do I fail to make you comfortable, Jerry?"

"You? Look here, Helen, I don't like to have you ask any sich questions. You're the only feller in this

world that could er pulled me through, an', 'cept Paul an' Pete, you're the only one I'd bet on all the time. I know I'm makin' a slouch of myself by kickin' up a row every once in a while, but sometimes I git to feelin' kinder rocky, an' can't help yippin'."

"I don't wonder you feel discouraged, my poor boy; but try to fight against such thoughts. The doctor says you would grow better very fast in the country, where the air is fresh and wholesome, and where you could be out of doors a great deal. I am trying to devise some way to get you there."

"Without you?" Jerry cried, in alarm.

"It is n't possible both of us could go, dear; one must remain here to earn money for the other."

"Then you need n't think 'bout it any more, for I would n't go as far as the ferry, 'less you was along."

"Suppose, Jerry, the doctor said you would never be well again unless you had such a home?"

"That would n't make the least bit of difference; I won't go an' lose you."

"There could be no such thing as losing me, dear. I should see you quite often, — perhaps once every month, and such nice long letters as I would write you every day."

"Look here, Helen, I see what your game is, an' it won't work! When I first come here I 'lowed to crawl off somewhere outer the way; but you got the best of me for a spell. Now if you should try to send me inter the country, where I could n't be with you every minute, I'd run away as sure's my name's Jerry."

"There is no reason why you should get so excited about it, dear," Helen said, with a sad laugh, as she stroked the cripple's hair tenderly, "for as yet it seems impossible to make such an arrangement. I have been hoping there might be some good fortune come to us suddenly, and you could have what you needed."

"I've got it already, an' it's a mighty big pile more 'n I deserve. What would I done if it had n't been for you? Say, Helen, we'd better stop this kind of chin-in', 'cause it don't make either of us feel any too good. Is Sam Haley comin' to-day so 's to carry the stuff down to Lisenard Street?"

"I told him there would be no need to send the goods until to-morrow. Did you want to see him?"

"Not much I did n't! I jest wanted to get outer sight while he was here, that's all."

"Now Jerry! You are not going to be so foolish again as to feel ashamed because your leg has been amputated."

"Course I am. He comes here, looks me all over, like I was the woman with whiskers down to the dime show, an' then goes an' tells the other fellers how I fiddle round on one foot."

"I am quite certain Sam does n't do anything of the kind. He is very sorry that you have been so afflicted."

"That's what I don't want him to be! What business is it of his? I'll hit him over the head with this crutch if he don't stop sich monkey shines!"

"Jerry, do I make you angry when I say I am sorry for you?"

"Course you don't. What got sich an idee in your head, Helen? You're different from Sam."

"Yet I think, in his way, he has as much sympathy for you as I have."

"Well, he'd better not, if he knows what's good for hisself! Say, Helen, can't you 'ford to knock off work to-day?"

"Why should I?"

"So's we can kinder —"

He was interrupted by a knock at the door, and hurriedly pushed Helen away, that the visitor might not see her kneeling by his side.

It was the landlady, who brought a letter, and, with it as an excuse, appeared bent on making a long visit.

Helen, recognizing the handwriting, tore open the envelope with feverish haste, while the visitor seated herself by Jerry's side, as she inquired regarding his health.

Master Bascomb was not absolutely rude to the well-meaning woman, but she would have been very dull indeed if she had failed to see that she was not welcome.

The invalid paid no attention to such of her questions as referred to himself, answered others curtly, and positively refused to be beguiled into explaining how the accident had occurred.

The landlady remained only a few moments after Helen finished reading her letter, but to Jerry it seemed as if she would never bring her visit to a close, so impatient was he to learn what it was which caused

Paul's mother to appear so excited and look so radiantly happy.

As the woman went toward the door Helen arose to her feet, and stood in a listening attitude until the sound of footsteps on the stairs told that the visitor was descending to the lower floor.

Then Helen raised Paul in her arms, and knelt once more by Jerry's side, holding up the baby's face for him to kiss.

"What's crawlin' on yer?" Jerry asked, now almost as excited as his companion.

"Oh, Jerry! Jerry! What would be the best news I could have?"

"I s'pose you'd say it was Dick's comin' home; but of course that can't happen for a good while yet."

"But it *can*, Jerry! It *has* happened! He is free, and wants us to come to him!"

"There's somethin' wrong 'bout that. Fellers don't get outer jail till their time's up."

"But Dick has been pardoned! There was a fire in one of the workshops, and he risked his life to save some poor men who were held fast by the burning timbers! For that he was pardoned, and one of the contractors has given him work at Kisco, where we are to go at once. He has hired a house just outside the town, and is there this moment waiting for us. Here is a post-office order for money with which to pay our railroad fares!"

Helen was so thoroughly excited by the joyful news that it seemed absolutely necessary her happiness should

find some vent, and she began kissing Paul with a fervour that bewildered and almost frightened the little fellow.

Jerry gazed toward her, but yet saw nothing. There was an expression of deepest pain on his face, and every now and then he drew his hands across his eyes with an angry gesture, wiping the tear-stains from them when positive Helen could not see him.

"Oh, Jerry! is n't this hour worth all the sorrow and trouble we have had?"

The invalid nodded, but did not trust himself to speak.

"Are n't you perfectly happy now?"

"I s'pose I am," he managed to say, after some difficulty.

"*Suppose* you are?" Helen cried, sharply, as she peered up into his face; and then, noting the look of sorrow, asked anxiously, "What is it, Jerry dear?"

"Nothin' much."

"Are you in pain, dear?"

"No."

"You can't be sorry that we are to leave the city, Jerry?"

"Of course I'll feel kinder bad when you go off; but I reckon I shall get over it."

"Jerry! Now you are positively unkind. *You* are to go with me, of course."

"I allow your Dick 'll have all he can do takin' care of you an' the kid."

"Jerry Bascomb, listen to me!" and Helen spoke in

a more decided tone than her companion had ever before heard her use. "Dick intends that you shall come with me, and —"

"What makes you think so?"

"Because he says so. Listen to this portion of the letter," and Helen read:—

"‘If it is n’t safe to move our Jerry now, wait until he is able to travel. Much as I want to see you, my darling, I would prefer my happiness was deferred yet many days than that you attempted to bring him before the doctors were positive there would be no danger. If he needs anything which you cannot buy because of lack of money, let me know, so I may send more, for I feel rich now, with a certainty of work at three dollars a day so long as I act the part of a man. If you do not leave the city immediately, write at once, and tell me what Jerry says about living out here in the country. Say to him that no man ever spoke more friendly words than he did the day I was sentenced. I can’t help saying I am glad he is in trouble, for now I can do something toward paying an instalment on the great debt I owe him.’"

"Jerry, do you understand *now* what good fortune has come to us both? The doctor told me yesterday you would never get well so long as you remained in these stuffy rooms, and it has seemed as if I would sacrifice all my hopes for the future if by so doing I could secure for you what is needed. Now nothing is to be sacrificed. Dick is free, and I know he will always be an honest man; you are to have a home in the country, and I shall be with the three people I love best in all

this world. Kiss me, Jerry, and thank God for His wondrous mercy and goodness."

"He would n't want to have a one-legged duffer like me thankin' Him ; but it *does* look like we was goin' to be fixed fine as silk." And for the first time since the accident which made him a cripple, Jerry Bascomb whistled "Annie Rooney."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEW HOME.

The good news wrought quite as great a change in Jerry as in Helen.

He had never so much as allowed himself to draw mental pictures of a life in the country, believing it would not be possible to compare them with the reality, but now it seemed as if he could think of nothing else.

He speculated as to what kind of a house Dick had hired, how much ground might belong with it, and if there would be plenty of trees.

"I'm goin' to stay out doors every minute it's light the whole of the first week," he said, before Helen had been able to decide how to set about making a change of homes. "I'll lay right down on the ground, an' let the sun shine on me while I watch Paul an' Pete an' the birds. It won't take long to grow strong there, where everything is so fine."

"I am certain you will get better very fast, Jerry dear. The doctor said the only medicine you needed was pure air, and you shall stay out of doors just as long as you wish."

"The best medicine I can have will be the knowin' that you don't have to work your fingers off makin' clothes for almost the same as nothin'. Say, won't

Sam's eyes stick out when he knows we're goin' to move?"

"He will be surprised, and probably attribute the change to his advice."

"How's that?"

Helen told of the advice Master Haley had given relative to the best method of getting the invalid into the country, and Jerry said, seriously, —

"It must er made you feel kinder funny, when he wanted you to take me to your home?"

"I was wretched, Jerry, for it seemed more than ever as if we were acting a lie in allowing your friends to suppose we were relatives. But now I am really going to take you to my home. *My* home! How nice that sounds, Jerry!"

"You bet it does! So your Dick was glad I spoke to him when he got his sentence?"

"He could n't have felt otherwise, my dear. Until you said what you did he thought he had n't a friend, except me, in all this big city, and how happy he is at the thought that he can do you a favour!"

"Of course if I could knock round same's I used to, I should n't hang on to you, Helen; but it would break me all up to have you go away an' leave me behind."

"Jerry, you know I could never do anything like that. You could n't be nearer to me if you were my brother, and, in heart at least, I am really one of your family. I wonder what Pete will do when he has a chance to run as much as he pleases?"

"He'll tumble all over hisself. That dog'll pick up

as fast as I shall, when he gets out inter the fields. We won't have to 'keep off the grass,' eh?"

"You will be allowed to do exactly as you please, Jerry dear, and I expect to see you moving around as easily as ever after we have been there a month. When shall we start?"

"Jest as soon as it can be done. We don't want to stay here a minute longer 'n we have to."

"It will take two days to finish the work we have on hand —"

"Send it back to 'em, an' say as how I aint willin' you should sew any more."

"That would n't be treating them right, Jerry. They have been kind to us in a certain way, and we must do as we would be done by. This is Wednesday, and we can be ready to go Saturday."

"I wish we was goin' to take the next train."

"So do I, dear, but there is very much to be done first. I will write a note to Dick, telling him when we are to come, and go down to the post-office for the money. You won't care if I leave you alone?"

"Not a bit of it! I'm feelin' so good I'd jest as soon all the fellers I know should see me hobblin' round, an' I won't get mad agin when they ask if it hurt to have my leg cut off."

Master Bascomb's brother merchants had been excited many times since the day on which he was crippled, but it was all as the most placid existence, compared with the astonishment which took possession of them when Sam Haley announced that

"Jerry's folks was going to lug him off inter the country to live!"

Bolivar's Ghost, who, on more than one occasion when he believed it safe, had intimated that "Jerry Bascomb's folks didn't 'mount to so very much after all," and stated as his belief that "she never saw the country in her life," was humbled exceedingly, both in his own and others' opinions, when Sam drew generously upon his imagination to describe the home which was to be Jerry's.

He pictured it as a "place bigger'n Central Park, chuck full of sheep, an' cows, an' roosters." He imagined the farmhouse to be larger and finer than the City Hall, and explained that "most likely Jerry would be drivin' a pair of hosses when he wanted to go out, 'stead of usin' his crutches."

"I'm goin' up there, an' so is Tug," he added, in conclusion to the story. "Jerry's folks said as how she'd like to have us any time, an' we could stay as long as we wanted to. He's 'bout wild at havin' sich a swell chance, an' I tell you —"

"When's he goin'?" Bolivar's Ghost asked, quickly.

"Saturday."

"Then all hands of us will go to the depot an' give him a big send-off."

"Oh, we will, eh?" Tug cried, fiercely. "Who give you the right to boss things? I know what you've been sayin' 'bout Jerry's folks, an' you can bet you can't get up so big a send-off that she'll ask you to go out there an' stop!"

Then Master Jones beckoned Sam aside, and asked in a whisper,—

“Is it straight goods 'bout her sayin' we could go out there to visit?”

“Sure! Cross my throat if it aint!”

“An' did she really mean it?”

“Course she did, 'cause she said so twice, an' Jerry 'lowed we'd better wait three or four weeks, till he got better, so 's he could show us round.”

“Be you goin'?”

“Well, see here, Tug, what do you take me for? Goin'! You bet your bottom dollar I am! Sich chances don't come very often, an' I'll scoop this one in, or know the reason why!”

“An' you an' me will travel up there together, like a couple of swells?”

“If we don't it'll be 'cause they've shut off takin' swells in the cars!”

Then Tug rejoined his less fortunate companions, and announced that Jerry should have a “send-off,” but that he and Sam would take entire charge of the ceremony.

It really seemed as if Jerry began to improve in health from the moment he heard the good news.

There was no longer any danger of his being despondent, for he had plenty of pleasing food for thought, and when the day finally came on which the “swell home” was to be abandoned for one far more beautiful and health-giving, Helen's only fear was lest his excitement become so great as to be hurtful.



JERRY'S FAMILY

When, with Sam's assistance, the little party arrived at the railroad station, and it was the first time Jerry had attempted to walk any distance with his crutches, they found not less than one hundred boys of all sizes and ages gathered there to participate in the "send-off."

Unfortunately, however, the policeman stationed at that point objected to the proposed demonstration, and Tug, looking very sorrowful, whispered to Jerry, —

"We was goin' to give you 'bout the swellest kind of a good-by, but that big duffer over there says he won't have anything of the kind, so all we can do is holler when the train pulls out. He can't stop that, for we can run faster'n him. I hate perlicemen what er allers puttin' on airs, an' some day I'll show 'em a thing or two."

"It's all right, Tug, an' perhaps it's jest as well, 'cause Helen is kinder funny sometimes, an' might think it was n't jest the thing to kick up a row. Say, you an' Sam are comin' up to see me before long?"

"That's how he allowed; but what does your folks say 'bout it?"

"She wants to see yer. Helen thinks a good bit of what you an' Sam have done to help us —"

"It's been all Sam; I did n't do anything 'cept bring the fellers up there one day."

"But you raised money enough for me to buy a stand."

"You did n't take it, so that don't cut any figger."

"Yes it does, 'cause you was willin' for me to have it. Of course, I don't know jest how things are fixed up to

Helen's house, but she says it'll be all right for you to come, 'cause you can sleep most anywhere, if there aint beds enough."

"Beds! We don't want any style like that! I would n't waste my time sleepin' if I was out in the country. Say, she's a dandy, aint she?"

"Don't make any mistake 'bout that! If you knowed her as well as I do, you'd say she was way up, jest as high as anybody can be. What's the Ghost dancin' round so lively for?"

"He's only tryin' to show off, in hopes he'll get asked up to your house."

Helen interrupted the conversation to say that they had better enter the cars, and, simple though such an act usually is, she found it very difficult to accomplish, because of the fact that each of Jerry's friends appeared to think it necessary he should assist in some way.

Not until after Sam and Tug had assisted the brakeman in clearing a passage could Helen step on board the train, and then Tug brought Pete in under his coat, for Jerry intended to smuggle the dog through in the same car with himself, not caring to trust such a precious animal to the mercies of the baggage-master.

The boys were gathered outside where they could see Jerry at the window, and Tug and Sam were bidding the "family" good-by, when Master Jones whispered,—

"Say, Jerry, is it straight goods that you did n't know when your leg was cut off?"

Master Bascomb was too happy to allow himself to be annoyed by such a question, and replied, without the slightest show of ill-temper,—

"They give me somethin' what put me to sleep, an' when I woke up the job was done."

"What did they do with the part what was cut off?"

"I dunno; I never asked."

"Buried it, I reckon."

"I guess so."

"Did it bleed much?"

Before Jerry could reply, the warning cry of "all aboard" was heard, and Master Jones leaped to the platform in time to join the "send-off" party in a series of the loudest and most prolonged yells that were probably ever heard in that section of the city.

It was four weeks from the day Helen Moulton received the letter which told of a new life—a life free from the shadow of crime—had begun, and Jerry Bascomb was leaning on his crutches in the orchard of the home to which Dick and Helen had brought him, watching the nest-building operations of two robins.

Already the wasted face had taken on the tinge of health; it was no longer painful for him to move about, and all fear of being an object of derisive pity had fled.

Master Bascomb whistled very often these days, and spent no small amount of time trying to teach Paul the same art.

"Jerry," and Helen came softly to his side, with the baby in her arms, "are you happy now?"

"Happy, Helen? Why, that aint a marker to the way I feel."







